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FRENCH CLASSICISM

BY

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TO

E. P. W.

PREFACE

Investigators of the French classical age are prone to isolate the great writers of the seventeenth century. Students tend to feel, even when they know better, that Corneille and Racine were the undisputed leaders of the drama, that Boileau was the only spokesman for criticism. In this short volume I have emphasized the greater complexity of the age and have considered it also in its political and social environment. The perspective changes, and some great names give way to others less famous today: La Fontaine disappears somewhat behind a Rapin or a Bouhours.

I have not attempted an encyclopaedic survey, but rather an outline, in which I have sought to keep the chief ideas in the foreground, instead of making complete enumerations of works or exhaustive bibliographies. Yet, as the book is meant primarily for English-speaking students, I have sometimes included references which to the French specialist may seem elementary.

I have tried to show, with even less emphasis on the technical literary forms of the sixteenth century, that the classicism of the Renaissance deserves almost as serious consideration as that of the seventeenth century. In many ways, indeed, it is more akin to ancient classicism and is, at least in its ideals, often ethically superior to that of the age of Louis XIV. On the other hand, inasmuch as the social and literary forces of the eighteenth century became entangled with other forces, some of them foreign, I have thought it wise to stop with the seventeenth century.

The criticism is anticipated that, though I have been brief, I have included authors or books not strictly classical. I have purposely avoided isolating writers or treating their works as logical abstractions. I have sought to merge them with their times. If this semi-historical method has defects, it has very distinct corresponding advantages.

I am grateful to my colleagues, Professors J. D. M. Ford, C. H. Grandgent and E. S. Sheldon for useful suggestions made while the work has been going through the press, and for cordial help in reading proof.

C. H. C. W.

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PART I

THE FOUNDATIONS

CHAPTER I

THE CLASSICAL SPIRIT

THE student of French literature has read only a few pages when he comes upon the word Classicism. Hardly a phase of modern French letters can be satisfactorily explained without a mention, if only for contrast, of this important tendency. Indeed, a moment of reflection will convince us that "classicism" is one of the chief contributions of the French to critical and aesthetic discussion. This is true, even though to people of Teutonic origin, as to many Frenchmen of to-day, romanticism may seem more in harmony with one's natural feeling.

The words "classic" and "classical" are used in various ways. At times they relate specifically to the Greeks and Romans, as when we call Virgil a classical author; at times they refer to the best periods of any literature and the authors of those periods, as when we term Shakespeare an English classic; at times, again, they mean something based upon the best, or what is thought to be the best, as when we speak of the classic style of Addison.[1]

The expression classicism includes, then, at least two ideas: one merely implying preëminence, the other definitely asserting that the Greeks and the Romans exemplify that preëminence. In using it with reference to French literature, both meanings are taken into account. The classical age of French literature is, by general consent, assumed to be the seventeenth century. The literature of that period is based on an attempted assimilation of what had long been considered the best in literature, the classical authors or, at any rate, certain classical authors of antiquity. Why, then, should the ancients have seemed to the French the

[1] Cf. Sainte-Beuve, *Qu'est-ce qu'un classique?*

most worthy of imitation, and why did such imitation, after the preliminary period of the sixteenth century, attain admired results in the seventeenth ? Can we trace any intellectual tradition connecting the three civilizations ?

The classical period of Greek literature, the golden age, if we may be understood in our use of the words, is assumed to be the time of Pericles. It was that epoch in the history of Athens when its thinkers no less than its men of action, its poets and historians no less than its generals, were the embodiment, the former in literature, the latter in action, of the tendencies of the Greek race; when the culture of the people best deserved the specific name of Hellenic; when the current coin for the interchange of ideas was most purely national, based upon those conceptions which, since prehistoric times, had down to Socrates and Plato acquired a more conscious and concrete value.

So it was in Rome. The golden age of Roman literature has been placed at different times in the history of the people. But to the majority, who think the Roman mind inapt to achieve by its own unaided efforts the highest intellectual attainments, the golden age of Latin literature is that of Augustus. Roman men of letters were then most fully conscious of the aims and ideals of their own race, and were able, with the somewhat artificial and stilted resources of their language, to give expression to the thoughts constituting their intellectual stock-in-trade. These happened, in this case, to be largely Hellenic, but they were at least remoulded in harmony with the traditions and tendencies of Roman civilization. And thus it came about that, though Cicero's education was largely Hellenic, though he had " ground in Molon's mill," though his letters are crammed with Greek, and his philosophical writings are popularizations in hybrid phraseology of the Greek philosophers, yet he is none the less Roman. Virgil, when imitating Theocritus in the *Eclogues* or Homer in the *Aeneid*, and Horace, when copying Greek lyrics, are both Roman poets, because to the best material at their command they give a Roman application and value.

So it was at the time of the Italian Renaissance. Let us remember, even if we do not fully accept it, the often repeated statement of writers such as Burckhardt, that this was the "coming to self-consciousness" of a people long "oppressed" by the traditions of the Middle Ages, and the formation of a new civilization by the grafting upon the Italian mind of classical antiquity. The result was what John Addington Symonds calls "the highly perfected individuality of the Italians that made them first emerge from mediaeval bondage and become the apostles of humanism for the modern world."

Finally, in French literature, the Renaissance in the sixteenth century began a new era which culminated in the classicism of the seventeenth. This does not imply that the classics were better known in the seventeenth century than in the previous one. Never was imitation of the ancients more open and direct than during the sixteenth century. But for that very reason it was imitation rather than assimilation. In the seventeenth century French civilization reached, in letters as in politics, a harmony of *organization* (the word is perhaps more suitable than "development") which permitted it to give play to its intellectual activities and produce the age of Louis XIV. The statement holds good even when we concede that classicism was less pervasive than used to be assumed and was far from permeating every period or phase of the seventeenth century.

The classical stage of French literature seems, then, to occupy that part of the national history when, as in the classical ages of other nations, the organization of life reached a full development. This organization was more of the intellectual and higher social classes than of all parts of the population. It need not even be assumed that such a development has necessarily always seemed the best, judged by varying ethical standards of other periods. The level of physical comfort in the twentieth century may be infinitely higher than that of the seventeenth. Other periods of French history, too, may in some respects have seemed more glorious, and Napoleon surveying an empire extending from the

Elbe to Rome and surrounded by tributary states, may well have thought his the grandest epoch of national history. Yet no period of French literature is more barren.

What we mean is that under Louis XIV, or during a certain part of his reign, the component elements of French social and political life reached harmonious interworking.[1] French society may have been coarse beneath its surface polish, the government tyrannical, the nobility oppressive. Yet the administration of affairs was organized by Colbert, following Sully, Richelieu and Mazarin, and the monarch in person supervised the world of letters with as much minuteness as he did that of business. All elements combined in a political, social and religious unity to produce a nation respected abroad and a literature which for a hundred years was the model for Europe.[2]

This literature was consciously based upon certain Greek qualities as the French remotely saw them, modified by the influence of the Romans for whom they felt the affinity of history and of tradition. Finally, the bequest of the ancients reached France through Italy.

So it remains true that in the study of French literature we are constantly harking back to the seventeenth century, that the seventeenth century is the lineal descendant of the sixteenth, and that the sixteenth-century literature shows the French mind

[1] "L'Etat devint un tout régulier, dont chaque ligne aboutit au centre." — Voltaire, *Siècle de Louis XIV*, ch. 29.

[2] Cf. Voltaire's *Siècle de Louis XIV*, ch. 25: "Il semblait que la nature prît plaisir alors à produire en France les plus grands hommes dans tous les arts, et à rassembler à la cour ce qu'il y avait jamais eu de plus beau et de mieux fait en hommes et en femmes. Le roi l'emportait sur tous ses courtisans par la richesse de sa taille et par la beauté majestueuse de ses traits. Le son de sa voix, noble et touchant, gagnait les cœurs qu'intimidait sa présence." Contrast with this obvious exaggeration the other side of the picture in the letter attributed to Fénelon: "On a rendu votre nom odieux, et toute la nation française insupportable à tous nos voisins. On n'a conservé aucun ancien allié, parce qu'on n'a voulu que des esclaves." Just as the Germans have been called Huns during the Great War, so Louis XIV was called an Attila by contemporary German writers and his cruelties were attacked by them. Cf. H. Gillot, *le Règne de Louis XIV et l'opinion publique en Allemagne.*

first coming into contact with the *spirit* of antiquity. We emphasize advisedly the word " spirit," for though many ancient authors had been known to the French throughout the Middle Ages, they had usually failed to modify the course of French thought. The history of classicism tells how the French mind tried to assimilate what it understood of antiquity. The result was attained only after a long struggle, with steps backward as well as forward, and was fully reached in the seventeenth century. Moreover, many critics of course feel that modern classicism is at best a very imperfect copy of the original.

What is the antique spirit as it presented itself to the French, though not as they always conceived it? It is a product composed both of Hellenic and of Roman elements, which it seems wise to distinguish.

We must, at the very outset, be on our guard against certain false ideas. The *idola specus* of numerous critics and aesthetic commentators of Greek life have so far vitiated our true conceptions that it is almost as necessary to point out what we must not as what we should believe. Professor Lewis Campbell in his *Religion in Greek Literature* [1] gave a convenient classification of the various " superficial generalities and rhetorical commonplaces " which have to be swept aside:

1. The belief, prevalent since the Renaissance, that the Greek was simply a lover of beauty, living a life devoted only to enjoyment, without serious care or ethical consideration.
2. The belief that the Greek is the type of pure reason.
3. The importance attributed to the Serenity (*Heiterkeit*) of the Greeks.
4. The misuse of the moderation of the Greeks, from the Delphic μηδὲν ἄγαν to the Aristotelian μεσότης.

All these views contain a certain grain of truth and nearly all should be given due space in an examination of the Hellenic

[1] P. 17.

spirit. It is when we consider the idea from too abstract a point of view and generalize too much that we begin to play cup and ball with *Heiterkeit* and *Allgemeinheit*, or mouth such phrases about Greek life as the following from Symonds's *Greek Poets:*

> We may tell of blue Aegean waves islanded with cliffs that seem less real than clouds, whereon the temples stand, burning like gold in sunset or turning snowy fronts against the dawn. We may paint high porches of the gods, resonant with music and gladdened with choric dances; or describe perpetual sunshine and perpetual ease, no work from year to year that might degrade the body or impair the mind, no dread of hell, no yearning after heaven, but summer time of youth and autumn of old age, and loveless death bewept and bravely borne.

It is unquestionable that almost every generation coming face to face with Greece, in literature or in art, has felt the spell and has experienced wonder and admiration. Few have echoed the summary judgment of Dr. Johnson: "Demosthenes, Madam, spoke to an assembly of brutes, a barbarous people." [1]

Different critics, poets or artists have, it is true, interpreted the charm of Hellenism in varying ways, according to the bias of their own temperament or according to the spirit of the times.[2] They have seen separate elements of a singularly rich nature, and have consequently in turn given sole emphasis to almost diametrically opposed tendencies. The emotionalist finds in Greek life something very different to admire from the rationalist. Yet both are apt to use the same name of Beauty. The Pindarism of Ronsard, the *Phèdre* of Racine, the *edle Einfalt und stille Grösse* of Winckelmann, the anacreontic boudoir-Hellenism of eighteenth-century France, the Alexandrinism of Chénier, the romanticism of Chateaubriand's descriptions of Greece, the sensuousness of Musset's *blonde Astarté qu'idolâtrait la Grèce*, the impassiveness of Leconte de Lisle and the Parnas-

[1] See such works as G. Lowes Dickinson, *The Greek View of Life;* R. W. Livingstone, *The Greek Genius and Its Meaning to Us;* Lane Cooper (editor), *The Greek Genius and Its Influence;* Francis W. Kelsey (editor), *Latin and Greek in American Education, with Symposia on the Value of Humanistic Studies.*

[2] See, for example, R. Canat, *la Renaissance de la Grèce antique (1820–1850).*

sians, the mysticism of Louis Ménard's *Rêveries d'un païen mystique*, all are tributes to the power of Greece. Walter Pater probably imagined that his Patervinity had something Greek, and even decadent romanticists such as Oscar Wilde or d'Annunzio mask their aberrations under the cult of Hellenic beauty.[1] The greatest enemies find themselves side by side. Keats sneered at those who,

> . . . taught a school
> Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip and fit,
> Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
> Their ruses tallied. Easy was the task:
> A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask
> Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race!
> That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face,
> And did not know it, — no, they went about,
> Holding a poor decrepid standard out
> Marked with most flimsy mottos, and in large
> The name of one Boileau![2]

Yet when Keats wrote in the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*,

> Beauty is truth, truth beauty, — that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know,

he is at any rate using the same words as that very Boileau over a century before:

> Rien n'est beau que le vrai, le vrai seul est aimable.

Clearly, then, there must be something worth while in this longing for Greek beauty.

The Hellenic spirit, as manifested in Greek literature at the time of, for instance, Sophocles, was the expression of life as a whole — its religious, intellectual, political, social elements. It is no new tale that in a Greek state or πόλις, such as Athens, we find one of the most symmetrically developed organizations known to history. From the statements of historians and of political philosophers like Aristotle we infer that the conception of what has been called the " city-state " of Greece was an articulated whole, not inconveniently large. There the free citizens,

[1] Cf., for instance, *Trionfo della morte*, Book V, ch. 3. [2] *Sleep and Poetry*.

relieved from manual labor, the search for subsistence or arduous and ignoble toil, through the work of slaves, could find leisure for general culture and the pursuit of man's highest good or happiness. The state is necessary for man's best development, because it accords with his nature [1] as opposed to that of his slave, who is but a living chattel. The state affords the best opportunity for the development of that expression of harmonious activity [2] which is the function manifesting the perfection or excellence of human nature.

The citizen, then, exercising his highest function, tends towards a harmonious and well-regulated life of culture, in which all his faculties have full play, each according to its separate aptitudes. The result is health, physical and intellectual.

This theory of life, however academic it may have been and typical of Aristotle the professor and lecturer, at any rate helps to account for much in Greek life. The thought is easily seen to be quite different from our modern views, from the ideas which Christianity has made natural to us. The conception of life was of something finite, of equilibrium, measure and moderation. There was no striving for unattainable ideals.[3] It is easy to see how little place there was in Greek life for the mental torture of religious enthusiasts or for a Greek to commit suicide from the motive which has made moderns die, uncertainty as to what will become of the soul after death. Nor does such a scheme permit the annihilation of the body before the soul, the mutilation of physical health on the ground that the spiritual element is thereby exalted.

To the Greek, on the contrary, mind and body had each its function, and each function was noble in its way. When all the elements of man were in perfect correlation, not encroaching upon one another, those elements and faculties, physical and mental, were at their best, just as in the state each individual was a part of the whole and best performed his function as a component part of that whole.

[1] *φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῷον.* [2] *εὐδαιμονία.* [3] *ἐρᾶν ἀδυνάτων νόσος τῆς ψυχῆς.*

Now, when all was in working order the result was good and deserved the term εὖ; and what was good or fitting was most worthy of admiration, was most beautiful.[1]

Beauty was, therefore, a constituent element of the conception of Greek life. Hence the admiration for both intellectual excellence or mental beauty and for the human form and physical exercise, resulting in freshness and vigor, spontaneity of thought and action, many-sided ability: Sophocles and Thucydides were generals as well as writers, Socrates was a soldier and statesman as well as a philosopher, and, to go backward a step in history, Themistocles was, as Thucydides tells us, " most skilful in doing offhand what was necessary." [2]

This instinct for beauty, this highest development of individuality, combined with perfect relationship to the rest of the state, was expressed concretely by the various forms of Greek art — architecture, sculpture, poetry. An older school of aesthetic critics used to say that architecture and sculpture are preeminently Hellenic because of their definiteness, their finiteness, which make us seek a *principle of harmony* in the various portions of the Parthenon or admire the perfection of a noble statue. This investigation may be continued into literature, where the same quality is visible in Greek tragedy.

Greek tragedy has been called the sculpture of literature. It manifests the same definiteness and harmony of parts, an eurhythmy which critics think they distinguish even in the minuteness of its verbal elements, as in the stichomythia, or in its lyrical passages, such as the arrangement of the choral odes. But, regardless of such small details, a Greek tragedy is in its outlines a general portraiture of human emotions, not as in modern literature, one usually confined to love alone. The disturbing elements of the particular or of the contingent are eliminated. In their place we find a portraiture of types. The characters, under the form of the individual, are shown in conflict with the

[1] Τὸ εὖ = τὸ καλόν = τὸ ἀγαθόν.

[2] Thucydides, Book I, ch. 138: κράτιστος αὐτοσχεδιάζειν τὰ δέοντα.

great principles which, by one name or another, rule the world, fate, destiny, chance, or those upon which society is based, justice, moderation. So that Greek tragedy is called a generalized picture of life, and what it represents is true of all time.

Here we have at any rate one explanation of Greek beauty and the reason why Greek literature and art have remained through succeeding centuries the type of harmonious and symmetrical development, surpassed by none and approached only by those who during the Renaissance were able, for a time, to throw themselves into a mental attitude somewhat similar to that of the Greeks. They found their capacities acting in the same way and were " universal " men, of rich functions like the Hellenes.

One does not need, therefore, to be a metaphysical idealist to find a model for the beautiful. Our universal has come down to earth, and here it is " tumbling at our feet," where Socrates in the *Republic* found justice. Here on earth and in created form is a pattern of beauty which later ages seek to reproduce. Changes in art are different attempts to attain τὸ καλόν. This, however, we are never likely practically to acquire, so long as with our conception of the ideal we mingle other elements, such as the dogmas of Christianity, or political theories inconsistent with the ideal. Many, indeed, see beauty not in the finite but in the infinite, not in the Greek temple but in the Gothic cathedral.

It would be ludicrous to maintain that the Greek attitude was necessarily the best from every point of view. To the modern mind the city-state may seem ethically incomplete because we lay stress on strictness of conscience or replace moral by political *laissez faire*. Some think the greatest of Greek times the Homeric age when family life was happier and the position of women higher: the pictures of Hector and Andromache, of Odysseus and Penelope are not paralleled in the days of the hetaerae.

Moreover, permanence is not the characteristic of *all* elements of this system. The period of Greek supremacy was short and that of Athens still shorter, so that the glories of Greek art and

civilization sometimes seem like a rich growth covering an unhealthy condition, what might be floridly described as the hectic flush on the cheek of a consumptive. Finally, we must not push too far the "universality" of Greek beauty. Just as Pascal tells us that, had Cleopatra's nose been shorter, the history of the world would be different, so ethnologists may remind us that, if Charles Martel had lost the battle of Poitiers, the whole eurhythmy of life, letters and art in Western Europe and America would be different to-day.[1] The idea of beauty would be different, at least in the realm of "opinion."

But this much we can say: Hellenic art and literature were the expression of beauty and vigor in a finite world. This world was ruled by certain ethical principles as true to-day as they were then. The literature which sets forth those principles enables us to recognize in the doubts and dilemmas of the Greek author or actor our own feelings. Upon persons ruled by the feelings more than by the intellect the reactions are even more vividly sensuous: the poet is rarely irresponsive to Hellenic beauty. All these reasons account for the permanent meaning to us of Greek literature.

[1] "L'art n'est pas un, ou plutôt il n'y a pas un seul art. L'art japonais a ses beautés comme l'art grec. Au fond, qu'est-ce que l'art grec: c'est le réalisme du beau, la traduction rigoureuse du *d'après nature* antique, sans rien d'une idéalité que lui prêtent les professeurs d'art de l'Institut, car le torse du Vatican est un torse qui digère humainement, et non un torse s'alimentant d'ambroisie, comme voudrait le faire croire Winckelmann.

Toutefois dans le beau grec, il n'y a ni rêve, ni fantaisie, ni mystère, pas enfin ce grain d'opium, si montant, si hallucinant, et si curieusement énigmatique pour la cervelle d'un contemplateur." — Goncourt diary, ii, pp. 4–5.

CHAPTER II

UNDERLYING IDEAS. PLATONISTS AND ARISTOTELIANS

The writer has not infrequently tried the experiment of asking undergraduates, "What is classicism?" Again and again he has received a somewhat irrelevant answer amounting to: "It is a play constructed according to the three unities of Aristotle." Now, though neither is classicism confined to the drama, nor are the three unities to be found in Aristotle, yet the frequency of the reply shows to what an extent the external side of classicism is emphasized in the ordinary conception. Some historians go so far as to mark an antithesis between classicism and romanticism with the names of Aristotle and Plato. They say that classicism is the expression of scientific or artistic formalism, in accordance with the general tendency of Aristotle towards system; that romanticism, on the other hand, represents the free and unrestrained emotion, the poetical outpouring which they call characteristic of Plato. Romanticism is to them the literature of the intuitive imagination, classicism is the literature of the disciplined reason. As a matter of fact there are strong rational elements in Plato and they are as disciplined as the reason of Aristotle. What mysticism exists in true Platonism is superimposed on rationalism. Modern classicism is, in its essence, not merely Aristotelian but Platonic also, and the emphasis given to its Aristotelianism is the result of the use or misuse of one work of Aristotle, the *Poetics*, employed as a guidebook of practical aesthetics for the study of objective truth. Moreover, there is intuitive imagination in classicism as well as in romanticism.

The Greek mind, in the representatives whose works are of value to-day, Plato as well as Aristotle, is under the control of reason. There is abundant romanticism as well as classicism in

Greece, as there is in all human nature,[1] and a Greek mob was as irrational as a modern one; but the symmetry of spirit predominates, and that is what moderns have taken as the essence of their classicism. We have discarded the non-essentials of Greek civilization which, after all, were in the minority. In so doing moderns, as well as the Greeks Plato and Aristotle, have used the guidance of reason.

The fundamental postulate of the classicist in aesthetics is an ideal of beauty, a *beau idéal*, placed in or beyond reality and giving fixity to his judgment. The discussions of this *beau idéal* are, it is true, usually in the realm of art, but the principles and arguments are the same and can be used for the other forms of expression. Moreover, as this doctrine remained stable in France for many generations, from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century, we can rather freely use illustrations from different periods and from writers on different subjects. The classicist's belief ranged all the way from that of a reality, which may, indeed, be only in heaven, to a mere concept. But as we are told by Sir Joshua Reynolds, whose *Discourses* are an excellent exposition of the definitely crystallized classical theory: "The poets, orators and rhetoricians of antiquity are continually enforcing this position; that the arts receive their perfection from an ideal beauty superior to what is to be found in individual nature." [2]

It is scarcely within the scope of the present work to attempt an answer to the question, what *is* absolute beauty, beauty in itself? We can at most say how certain critics and theorists have tried to express it and how they have come by their views. We do not go into the essence of beauty except to see what it tends to be among the Greeks, our intellectual ancestors, and consequently what it may be in a literature and art derived from them. The classicist is prone to say that beauty resides in the

[1] "Dans tout classique digne de ce nom il y a toujours une parcelle de romantisme." — Castelain, *Ben Jonson*, p. 864.

[2] Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses*, No. III.

general or universal, which some may even call an abstract motionless concept; the romanticist tends to think that beauty resides in change, in the individual or particular. Ancient aesthetic theories, Taine pointed out in his *Philosophie de l'art*, tried to define beauty, and said, for instance, that it is the expression of the moral ideal, or of the unseen, or of human passions; then starting from this point, they would absolve or condemn. The ancient ideas, as we have already seen, connected the true, the beautiful and the good, and in beauty saw rhythm, symmetry, harmony of parts, unity in variety. So the eighteenth-century aesthetician Crousaz defined beauty as diversity reduced to unity, and as mathematics discovers uniformity he justified Plato for calling God the eternal geometer.[1] Modern ideas emphasize significance, expressiveness, utterance of all that life contains, the conception of the characteristic. The romanticist proceeds to the stupendous and even to the ugly on the frontier of beauty. A writer like Victor Cousin says that beauty is seized by the reason which judges the infinite in the finite, the absolute in the individual. This judgment must not be confused with feeling, which reduces the beautiful to the agreeable, the absolute to the relative. Concrete or real beauty is " unity in variety," the general in the particular, the essential in the non-essential. It is the simultaneous union of the general and the individual in a real object. The *beau idéal* is pure form and abstraction.[2]

The rigid modern classicist emphasizes, therefore, what is general. To Sir Joshua Reynolds perfect form in art is produced by leaving out particularities and retaining only general ideas. Says he: " On the whole it seems to me that there is but one presiding principle which regulates and gives stability to every art. The works, whether of poets, painters, moralists or historians, which are built upon general nature, live for ever; while

[1] Formey's *Discours préliminaire* to the P. André's *Essai sur le Beau*, ed. of 1759, p. xxxi.

[2] Cousin, *Du beau réel et du beau idéal*, in *Cours d'histoire de la philosophie moderne*, ii. Cf. also Formey's introduction to André's *Essai*, p. lviii: *consensum in varietate.*

those which depend for their existence on particular customs and habits, a partial view of nature, or the fluctuation of fashion, can only be coeval with that which first raised them from obscurity. Present time and future may be considered as rivals; and he who solicits the one must expect to be discountenanced by the other." And he also says: "A history painter paints man in general; a portrait painter, a particular man, and consequently a defective model." [1]

Plato and Aristotle saw in manifested beauty much the same thing, the expression of the ideal in forms of sense. Both saw something which the artist creates with elements of reality according to a model superior to reality, though Aristotle stopped at the abstract concept, whereas to Plato it became almost a living being or god. The modern seeker for the beautiful in letters and art, who belongs to a civilization having its foundations in Greece, has the simpler task of following a pattern already upon earth. The anti-classicist charges him with exercising his reason on the cut-and-dried imitation of a model no longer appropriate, and this charge of servile imitation the pseudo-classicist justifies. The true classicist replies that his use of reason is partly for *ascesis* and aids in the training of taste,

[1] *Discourses*, No. IV. What he says in the ninth discourse about Fine Arts applies also to literature: "The Art which we profess has beauty for its object; this it is our business to discover and to express; the beauty of which we are in quest is general and intellectual; it is an idea that subsists only in the mind; the sight never beheld it, nor has the hand expressed it; it is an idea residing in the breast of the artist, which he is always laboring to impart, and which he dies at last without imparting; but which he is yet so far able to communicate, as to raise the thoughts and extend the views of the spectator; and which, by a succession of art, may be so far diffused, that its effects may extend themselves imperceptibly into public benefits, and be among the means of bestowing on whole nations refinement of taste: which, if it does not lead directly to purity of manners, obviates at least their greatest depravation, by disentangling the mind from appetite, and conducting the thoughts through successive stages of excellence, till that contemplation of universal rectitude and harmony which began by Taste, may, as it is exalted and refined, conclude in Virtue." See also Jouin, *Conférences de l'Académie de peinture*, p. 204: "Sur cela quelqu'un de la compagnie, prenant la parole, dit qu'à parler universellement, la véritable beauté consistait en la perfection des choses, en leur juste proportion et en une convenance raisonnable," etc.

but that he, no less than the undisciplined romanticist, uses intuition.

It can thus be seen that the customary antithesis between romanticism and classicism is inaccurate: a literature of the imagination opposed to a literature of reason. Both have intuition, but the classicist makes that intuition obey law, as Malherbe according to Boileau " réduisit la Muse aux règles du devoir." The classicist inclines to discipline, the romanticist to license; the classicist tends to be a rationalist, the romanticist is almost inevitably an emotionalist and his imagination lingers among the Shadows of the Cave.

Plato puts at the head of his philosophy the idea, Aristotle places at the goal of his the form, the object towards which nature aims. Both conceive a universal behind the phenomenon or the individual, though to Plato it stands in an eternal immobility *sub specie aeternitatis*, whereas in the philosophy of Aristotle there is a dynamic process towards a result perhaps never attained.

So far Plato and Aristotle stand in agreement. It is in details that modern critics have made them unnecessarily divergent and patrons of antithetical literary schools. In Plato's world of thought there are two faculties, intuitive thinking and discursive thinking. But intuitive and discursive thinking are not in parallel opposition. By dialectic one rises from the unsystematized hypotheses of discursive thinking to the unity of intuition. Intuition deals with the idea, and discursive reason with general notions which are not yet the idea, but intuition would not be what it is without the help of discursive thought. To the modern classicist as to Plato there is intuition as well as reason, and as in Plato, but not with the romanticist, intuition is not severed from the rational element.

According to Plato's aesthetics the creative artist has intuition of the idea by reminiscence [1] of knowledge in some previous existence, and his creation or imitation shares in the idea in so far

[1] ἀνάμνησις.

as it participates more closely in the world of thought above and behind the world of sense, by the processes already mentioned. The so-called " romanticism " of Plato is due to the fact that, in dialogues such as the *Ion*, the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, he speaks of a poetic frenzy, which seems a divine inspiration making genius outstrip the conscious effort of rational intelligence. Yet even to Plato the delirium cannot be separated from art. Indeed, in the *Republic* and the *Laws* the divine frenzy becomes a dangerous madness, and the poet, who has but feeling and deals only with copies of copies, is far removed from truth.

The modern classicist is justified, then, if he says that he is Platonic as well as Aristotelian, that his intuition is not widely divergent from that of Plato, even if in lyric poetry he is influenced by the Horatian *vates* as well as by Platonic " enthusiasm." [1]

The French seventeenth-century thinkers were, in certain respects, quite in harmony with Plato who was closer to them than they themselves realized. Many of them were under the influence of St. Augustine, a Platonist with an admixture of Neo-Platonism. He regarded the divine nature as fountainhead of Beauty, professed the identity of the Beautiful and the Good and connected beauty with morals. The Père André, writing it is true in the eighteenth century, says he adopts St. Augustine's principle " que c'est l'unité qui constitue, pour ainsi dire, la forme et l'essence du beau en tout genre de beauté. *Omnis porro pulchritudinis forma unitas est.*" Now the Père André was a follower of the Oratorian Malebranche who turned Cartesianism into a sort of Platonism, and Platonic Augustinianism had been an important influence in the Oratory back to its founder Bérulle.

Unexpectedly enough even Descartes can be brought into relation with Plato. It is true that Descartes banished all past

[1] Charlton's *Castelvetro's Theory of Poetry* (p. 142) points out that in the Aristotelianism and Platonism of the Renaissance, Aristotle was materialized and conventionalized by Horace, Plato was mysticized by Plotinus and Ficino.

philosophies and started the processes of reasoning afresh; it is true that he was a dualist instead of a monist and dealt with the question of certitude instead of that of unity. But that parts of the philosophy of Descartes are not inconsistent with Platonism we see in the ease with which Malebranche Platonized it. We can perhaps find more positive evidence: Descartes had been a friend and follower of Bérulle,[1] and, though only indirectly it may be, Descartes's system is influenced in places by Bérulle. There is a tendency towards Platonic realism in Descartes [2] even if held in check. Nor is it overstraining matters to say that Descartes's Reason grows to the authority of the Platonic ideas, impersonal and the same for all men. "Le bon sens est la chose du monde la mieux partagée," says he in the *Discours de la méthode*, and in a letter to Mersenne on Lord Herbert of Cherbury he says that all men have "une même lumière naturelle." [3]

An interesting instance, even if to-day only historically significant, of this Platonic bias is found in the doctrines of the nineteenth-century philosopher Victor Cousin. He was a great admirer of the seventeenth century, and as an idealist he continued the tendencies of Descartes's *a priori* reasoning opposed to empiricism. Finally, Cousin's thought was much influenced by Plato, whose system he had studied and whom he translated.

[1] "Or c'est précisément cette influence prépondérante du néo-platonisme qui établit la filiation de saint Augustin à de Bérulle, et par delà de Bérulle à Gibieuf et à Descartes. Sans doute nous ne retrouverons pas dans les œuvres de Bérulle la conception même de la liberté divine que devait soutenir Descartes; on pourrait au contraire y relever des indications jusqu'à un certain point contradictoires. . . . Si donc le fondateur de l'Oratoire a été le précurseur de la théorie cartésienne de la liberté divine, ce ne peut être qu'indirectement, en mettant en circulation une conception néo-platonicienne de Dieu dont la théorie de Descartes, comme aussi celle de Gibieuf ne furent que les développements immédiats et comme les prolongements. Or, précurseur en ce sens, il ne paraît pas contestable que de Bérulle l'ait été," *etc.* — E. Gilson, *la Doctrine cartésienne de la liberté et la théologie*, p. 167.

[2] "Nous ne voulons pas nier la tendence au réalisme platonicien chez Descartes." — O. Hamelin, *le Système de Descartes*, p. 179.

[3] Cf. O. Hamelin, *le Système de Descartes*, p. 160.

Cousin's so-called " eclecticism " saw an impersonal and a personal reason. Reason, impersonal, universal and absolute, appears in man without belonging to man. Human reason is the appearance in man of universal reason. Reason is not intelligence but is the object of intellection. Impersonal reason is the absolute; its apprehension is by a faculty which may be called reason but is not impersonal reason. Thus we have in us two reasons: one is our intelligence, the other is the intelligible.[1] God alone has perfect intelligence of the intelligible, so that in him alone meet and fuse those two reasons, unequally held in every finite mind. Thus the impersonal reason of Cousin, which he spiritualizes as God, plays very much the part of the Truth of Descartes or the Idea of Plato.

We cannot find a more typical presentation of French literary classicism than appears in the pages of Nisard's history of French literature. He defines the *esprit français*, of which the seventeenth century offers according to him the best expression, as the *esprit pratique*. Its qualities are clearness, precision, coördination of ideas. It stands for intellectual *ascesis*, training and the spirit of discipline. French literature seeks the expression of truth and gives a generalized presentation of life: " la réalité dont on a retranché les traits grossiers et superflus." In the masterpieces of French literature he finds " l'image la plus complète et la plus pure de l'esprit humain." He adds that " en faisant le portrait de l'esprit français j'ai presque fait le portrait de la raison elle-même." [2]

[1] Alaux, *la Philosophie de M. Cousin*, p. 112.

[2] The Frenchman has instinctive classifying habits. He is always seeking " une formule," " un plan." This praiseworthy tendency is not without its dangers in less brilliant minds, as the following quotations from G. Hanotaux, P. G. Hamerton and Mark Pattison may show: " Elle [the *bourgeoisie*] garde, de ses origines, un goût marqué pour les métiers de plume et les gloires de papier, une admiration sans borne pour la parole écrite et parlée, un respect pour les leçons du collège, une faveur pour les prix de concours et les notoriétés de l'école, un goût classique pour les opinions contrôlées, les gestes mesurés, les couleurs atténuées, les démonstrations proportionnées." — Hanotaux, *Histoire de la France contemporaine*, ii, p. 517.

" There may be some exceptions, but the general rule is that the Frenchman will

French classicism was, then, the expression of an attitude primarily intellectual. It tended towards abstract order and without being metaphysical, looked *more Platonico* for the beautiful behind the beautiful things. But in so far as formalism was cultivated it turned to Aristotle more than to Plato. It tried to embody truth and beauty in a static form as the expression of reason tested by clearness and characterized by order and precision. It was interested in human nature, rather than in the outer world, because it is in human nature that the rational is expressed. Even the artist Nicolas Poussin, wrote, " J'ai choisi la demeure de la ville, et non pas celle des champs où je vivrais déconsolé." [1] French classicism was objective, as the presentation of common traits rather than of personal idiosyncrasies. Finally, it sought its models in the literature of antiquity, because the ancients seemed to have best expressed the ideal of truth and beauty, which is " universal." [2] The characters in French clas-

profess to admire what he thinks he ought to admire, even when he has no general ardor of admiration at his disposal. The effect is to make conversations with Frenchmen uninteresting so soon as they turn upon famous masters. They will repeat the old laudatory commonplaces, and if you venture upon any criticism with the slightest originality in it, they will look upon you as an insular eccentric. They have been taught at school how to praise the famous men, they have been taught even the proper terms of laudation. I believe the Chinese learn to repeat the praise of their Classics in the same way." — Hamerton, *French and English*, Part V, ch. 1.

" Even a false system elevates the thoughts; but to be general without being exact, to systematize without reference to facts, this is to be superficial. In some countries and periods, this tendency rules the national mind, and has possessed itself of the higher education. In France, the impulse, given when about thirty years ago [*This was written in 1855*] the University and philosophical studies began to raise their head for the first time since their *de facto* suppression under the despotism of Louis XIV, was in this spirit. The literature and educated men of that country are characterized by habits of rapid generalization, a power of looking at things in masses, and speaking of them in the dialect of philosophy. But being based on no complete knowledge or solid acquisition of any kind, this habit is essentially misleading, and indeed is little more than a brilliant imposture." — Mark Pattison, *Oxford Studies*, in *Essays*, vol. i.

[1] Letter to M. Lemaire, Feb. 19, 1639, quoted by P. Desjardins, *la Méthode des classiques français*, p. 224.

[2] " — car il faut poser pour une Maxime indubitable, que jamais personne ne

sical tragedy were, after all, not Greek, Roman or French, but the expression of universal feelings.[1] Practically, the model was the result of tradition, in which many other elements besides the original ones had place, and in which these were sometimes even misinterpreted.[2] In consequence French seventeenth-century classicism was not identical with ancient classicism. Obviously its concrete manifestation could not be absolutely the same because of the difference of time and environment. It tended to be an imitation of a " general object," rather than the participation of the " general object " in the idea itself. In the great geniuses, however, the intuition or invention came closest to identification with the spirit of the model. Racine in poetry reaches the culmination of that symmetry and harmony of which French classicism is capable.

Modern classicism may thus be studied as the mould in which were cast certain literary forms in the seventeenth century, or we can look behind these to consider the intellectual temper which produced them. We can go further and see how certain men, of whom we find examples in the sixteenth century, when the study of ancient moralists was in favor, strove to make classicism a guide of life as well as a *vade mecum* for the production

sera sçavant dans la Poësie Dramatique, que par le secours des Anciens, et l'intelligence de leurs Ouvrages." — Abbé d'Aubignac, *Pratique du théâtre*, Book I, ch. 3.

[1] See Nisard's explanation of why Molière and Racine are eternal, in his history of French literature, Book III, Chap. 7, § 5. Cf. also: " Strictly speaking, indeed, no subject can be of universal, hardly can it be of general concern; but there are events and characters so popularly known in those countries where our Art is in request, that they may be considered as sufficiently general for all our purposes. Such are the great events of Greek and Roman fable and history, which early education, and the usual course of reading, have made familiar and interesting to all Europe, without being degraded by the vulgarism of ordinary life in any country." — Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses*, No. IV.

[2] " Study, therefore, the great works of the great masters, for ever. Study, as nearly as you can, in the order, in the manner, and on the principles, on which they studied. Study nature attentively, but always with those masters in your company; consider them as models which you are to imitate, and at the same time as rivals with whom you are to contend." — Sir J. Reynolds, *Discourses*, No. VI.

of literary works. If we confine ourselves to the first of these three methods of study, we shall not get beyond a technical analysis of types like epic or tragedy, of their rationalism expressed in abstract terms, their tendency to part from experience carried at times to such extremes that it has been said that " de toutes les fatalités du corps les héros tragiques n'en ont gardé qu'une: ils peuvent mourir." [1] If we are to consider the intellectual temper behind these works, then we must analyze the minds of people who planned their thought before writing, so that their ideas became lucid and just, who preached aesthetic as well as ethical moderation, but whose golden mean did not exclude indignation against the bad. We shall find ourselves on a Parnassus ruled by a dogmatic intellectualism, but where the desire for elegance sometimes causes Apollo to welcome Mr. Turveydrop. We understand the significance of the epithets in Boileau's " *agréable* fureur," " *douce* terreur " and " pitié *charmante*." We shall add that classicism is useful to the Frenchman, not only of the seventeenth century but of all times, because he is so logical that in rejecting classicism he goes to the other extreme and is logically illogical and ultra-romantic.

If, finally, we try to find in classicism a general guide for life in the modern world we shall welcome the sway of " wakeful reason, our affections' king," [2] and sympathize with those who try to unite common sense with the ideal, who are Platonists as well as Aristotelians, whose rationalism is used to support idealism. We shall find classicists of various kinds, some of them in their criticism falling far short of what they preach, intolerant, dogmatic and fault-finding. But we shall also understand that the true classicist aims to keep his reason sane and unprejudiced, to embody in his judgment common-sense, and in his life moderation, modesty and resolution, and among troubles *aequam servare mentem*. He tries to be, if possible, a *humanized* stoic

[1] Souriau, *De la convention dans la tragédie et le drame romantique*, p. 29.
[2] Ben Jonson, *The Forest*, Epode.

drawing from the study of the past such lessons as may give stability to a world chaotic in literature, in politics and in social evolution.[1]

[1] True classicism is hospitable. Cf. Nisard's history of French literature, vol. i, p. 21: "Nous l'aimons [la France] parce qu'elle nous paraît la meilleure patrie pour l'homme en général, et nous voudrions y donner le droit de cité à tout le genre humain." This is different from the political, traditionalistic classicism recently prevalent in France in a small set. Still the best cannot always live up to it, and Bossuet's attitude to a foe was as intolerant as that of Charles Maurras to a *métèque*.

CHAPTER III

RENAISSANCE CLASSICISM. THE THEORIES OF THE PLÉIADE

French classicism turned out to be vastly different from the ideal we have described. Greek classicism and French classicism were based upon dissimilar fundamental conceptions of creed and government. The seventeenth century, at any rate, placed " music " above " gymnastic," and its sense of measure (*σωφροσύνη*) became an intellectual rather than a moral quality.[1]

Other factors, too, complicated matters. The moderns made their model too comprehensive, so that it included not only all Greek, but Roman antiquity as well. They gave, especially in the sixteenth century, much attention to the Hellenistic or Alexandrian age, and at all times to Roman literature.

Euripides already represented the breaking away from the universal elements of Greek art. Instead of depicting with broad lines the conflict of eternal passions and eternal laws, he introduced a more subtle analysis. Just as in modern French realism an effort to avoid monotony drove the novelist to the Salpêtrière and the study of morbid pathology, similarly Euripides, by showing various phases of emotions and passions, seemed to Aristophanes to have degraded tragedy. It has repeatedly been said that Euripides is not typical of Greek genius, and to understand him " requires no special sympathy with the Greek spirit."

Gradually the creative spirit of Greek genius merged into an age of analysis. Instead of a spontaneous expression of ideals we get encylopaedic surveys of science and the laborious writers of the school of art for art's sake. A *tour de force* was valued above all things. Literature was composed more by men of learning than

[1] Hillebrand, *France and the French in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century*, ch. 1, says this of modern France.

by men of feeling. It is this feature which is usually meant when the epithet Alexandrian is applied to contemporary writers. It is life interpreted by the dweller in cities. Such is Anatole France in his poems or in *Thaïs*.[1]

The Romans were practical realists and did not so much as the men of Hellas deal with the universal. Their most original writers often imitated. In a language of highly artificial structure they borrowed from the Alexandrians as well as from the pure Hellenes. The Silver Age, in particular, after the Golden Age, lacked spontaneity, though not vigor, and turned with pleasure to authors of the kindred Alexandrian period.

When the Renaissance came to France, historical perspective was neglected. The classical ideal was made to include all antiquity, Rome as well as Greece, and it was stretched to include Italy, which had transmitted so many of the old writers.

The *esprit français*, upon which sympathetic historians of classicism like Nisard delight to dwell, is chiefly the consequence of the Latin training. The dominant features of the *esprit français* and particularly of its seventeenth-century manifestation, the *esprit classique*, are clearness of conception and logical deduction. The qualities which made the Romans a " nation of grammarians " and of lawyers, made Frenchmen students of language, from Ramus and Estienne to Vaugelas, no less than investigators of law. The result was a temperament inclined to practical reason, clearness of analysis, accuracy of definition, logical in its means of expression, gifted with power of rationalistic generalization. To the French philosopher method is more important than metaphysics, and French philosophers have often been mathematicians: Descartes, Pascal, d'Alembert, Condorcet, Comte, Bergson.

Such is the temperament of the great writers of the School of 1660. They rise to a more dignified height than does the unbridled nineteenth-century romanticist, though they lose what makes so much of the beauty of romanticism, lyrical emotion.

[1] For much more about Alexandrinism, see Couat, *la Poésie alexandrine*.

Critics proclaim that they are under the guidance of universal reason. We seem, in a way, to be finding ourselves back in antiquity, but we must not assume too perfect an identification. The *esprit classique* has many elements of similarity with Greece, but more with Rome. It is not a total organization of life, where art and action are equal, expressing harmony of body and soul. In France it is rather a definitely evolved attitude, worked out for a practical purpose, intelligibility, and the authority which this involves. Hence the Roman rather than the Hellenic ideal prevails. In so far as it is Greek it is not infrequently self-conscious, therefore Alexandrian.

The love of antiquity and of its literature had shown itself at different periods in French literature before the Renaissance of the sixteenth century. But the cult had been of a misunderstood antiquity and not of its best period or manifestation. Throughout the Middle Ages such writers as Ovid and Lucan had been in high favor, and Greece had been seen largely through a disguised Aristotle annexed by the church. In the sixteenth century practically for the first time " classicism " means more than merely the study of certain Latin authors.

The French Renaissance may perhaps be satisfactorily defined as the period in which authority and tradition were overthrown. The contributing causes were those to which we attribute the development of the modern spirit in Europe: the appearance of Greek churchmen in Italy; the downfall of Constantinople, and the spread of Greek teachers through the Western world, a cause somewhat exaggerated; the invention of printing, which made literature more accessible and subject to scrutiny; the growth of geographical discovery and knowledge. These same causes, of course, tended also to bring about the Reformation. In fact, the three great currents of French thought in the sixteenth century, it is pointed out, are the Renaissance, the Reformation and Humanism. Nor are these terms simply interchangeable: the Renaissance and the Reformation soon diverged. Both were a revolt against authority, but the Renaissance emphasized the sense of

freedom, the Reformation sought a new authority in the teachings of the primitive church. The humanist could in certain respects sympathize with either of the other tendencies: most humanists were men of the Renaissance, and some of them were, at least for a time, reformers. But the Reformation took a Hebraic bias different from the cult of Greece and Rome. Moreover, persecution and the turmoil of contest were not to the taste of those who loved the *templa serena*. These preferred the excitement of a conjectural emendation to warfare over dogma. Humanism, as we ask to define it in a way long accepted but narrower, it is true, than its name, is the cult of the best in humanity seen under the guidance of the ancients. In its older sense, indicated by the famous quotation "Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto," it did imply that all was of interest to man. Today, again, in the decline of the classical tradition of culture, the word is constantly used to imply interest in every experience,or even is confused with the social or ethical phases of humanitarianism. But for generations humanism was understood as the regulation of letters and of life by the standard of antiquity. Such a use of the term should, therefore, go uncriticized in these pages.

Hence it comes that the literature of sixteenth-century classicism was largely dominated by humanism. The humanism of the Renaissance we may differentiate from its mediaeval counterpart, by calling it the love for a better understood antiquity. Formerly the ancients had been seen through an unconscious and partial tradition. Now they were viewed at closer range and with truer knowledge of the best elements of ancient literature, the authors of Greece.

The humanists of the first half of the sixteenth century were, for the most part, erudite and technical scholars. We look about almost in vain among the prose writers in pure literature for a humanist, except in the greatest of them all, Rabelais. Among the poets from Lemaire de Belges to Marot and Margaret of Navarre we find here and there traces of humanism, but not enough to characterize them absolutely as humanists.

The spirit of humanism enters French poetry with the Pléiade. Ronsard and Du Bellay lead the movement to renovate the national literature and improve it by the study of classical models. The underlying principle of this laudable effort preached in the *Défense et Illustration de la langue française* is Platonic. The formulation of cast-iron "Aristotelian" rules for the different *genres* or types was, it is true, proceeding in Italy, and towards the third quarter of the sixteenth century it shows itself in the French drama. But, on the other hand, the central thesis of the *Défense* belongs, somewhat vaguely and indefinitely it is true, to doctrines preaching varying forms of invention called assimilation or innutrition, connected in principle with the Platonic notions of *methexis* or *anamnesis*, of participation or recollection, which Du Bellay got from Cicero, Horace and particularly Quintilian.[1] It is quite true that in practice the classicists of the Pléiade imitated as much as they assimilated, that the *pastiches* of Homer, Apollonius Rhodius, Theocritus, Virgil and Horace, or even of Ariosto, Serafino and Tebaldeo, outnumber the poems in which the spirit of the models has become French. But this was a defect of execution and not of theory. School exercise preceded originality.

The sixteenth-century classicism of the Pléiade is therefore shown in a literature of humanism striving, though not always successfully, to express itself with artistic taste. If we try to differentiate its content more fully, we find that upon the old stock have been grafted numerous elements which, at times, merge into one another, at times are almost incompatible. Chief among these are Hellenism, Alexandrinism, the Encyclopaedic eagerness, and Italianism, especially Petrarchism. We must be very careful not to neglect the native spirit. It is no longer permissible to adopt the former view which saw between the new literature and the old an abyss, which thought that the French mind of the Middle Ages was totally displaced by another one, that the new classicism was a wholly exotic growth, that even the publication

[1] Cf. Chamard, *Du Bellay*, pp. 61 and 124 (Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, x, 2).

of the *Défense* was a " coup de tonnerre." It is much more accurate to say that obviously the French *génie* is the same in all ages, that the author of the *Quintil-Horatian* was not entirely untrue to fact in calling the new *genres* mere transformations of old popular forms, that Ronsard was the heir of Jean Bouchet and the *rhétoriqueurs* as well as of Theocritus and Apollonius.[1]

By Hellenism, as already stated, is meant the impulse which prompted the men of the Renaissance to draw inspiration from Greek literature. The Italians, as usual, had set the example, but it was eagerly followed by the French humanists. An early thinker, Lefèvre d'Etaples, in spite of insufficient Greek training, tried to rescue the authentic text of Aristotle from the confusion of commentators. Lefèvre's intellectual method led him to initiate the first form of Protestantism in France, Fabrisianism. The technical scholar Budé was the ardent advocate of the study of the Greek language and letters, and saw in them the perfection of art, and in their study the best way to strengthen the intellect. Rabelais's universal genius pours into his work countless fragments of Greek erudition. Later, Henri Estienne argues the conformity of French with Greek. Above all Ronsard strives to imitate and to emulate the Greek poets from Pindar to Theocritus, Apollonius and the Anacreontic verses. Though Hellenism was, on the whole, a passing mood in French poetry and was destined soon to yield to more accessible and easily read Latin or Italian writers, yet its value is undeniable in strengthening the literature of the sixteenth century. Those poets who were Hellenists rose to a nobler even though occasionally obscure form of expression.

We give the name Alexandrinism to an intellectual temper apt to characterize certain non-creative or imitative literary ages.[2] The name, as we have seen, is derived from the Alexandria of the

[1] Some of the ways in which the *rhétoriqueurs* paved the way for the Pléiade were: love of the vernacular, cult of Latin antiquity, use of mythology, feeling for nature, taste for poetical periphrasis, invention of strophes, alternation of rhymes. Cf. H. Chamard, in *Revue critique*, vol. lii, p. 494.

[2] Cf. E. Faguet, *Propos littéraires, 2e série.*

Ptolemies, the home of the great library and the resort for study. Modern Alexandrinism has the same general characteristics as the ancient one: an often painstaking erudition, a frequent tendency towards finicky prettinesses in place of either the primitive and spontaneous or the majestic. Above all it imitates praiseworthy classical models in such a way as to emphasize the exotic quality of those models, though this does not hinder an Alexandrian age from thinking itself new and original. The modern poet, for instance, is likely to make mythological references, to strew his verses with quotations or allusive epithets, to see nature through books. His aim is to interest trained men of culture and he is at times aristocratically disdainful of the common man. A literature of Alexandrinism is therefore likely to be learned, critical and well-bred. Its defects may be narrowness, pedantry, over-wrought triviality, and inability to distinguish between the encylopaedic accumulation of facts and the true art of using them. An Alexandrian period is too consciously literary, an age of virtuosity, of artistry rather than of art.

The humanistic poets of the French Renaissance made one fatal mistake in their conception of antiquity. They not only fell into the natural confusion of lumping together all antiquity, Hellenic and Hellenistic, Greek and Roman, but they saw it largely through the Italy which had transmitted it to them. So that Italy was raised from being a means of approach to equality with the models. Even second-rate Italian writers were the object of admiration and imitation. The French interpreted the ancients as the Italians did, they accepted the verdicts of Italian critics, they followed the same reconstruction of literary *genres* and drew indiscriminately from the Italian poets. This is Italianism. Moreover, inasmuch as the great Italian lyric poet had been Petrarch, the Italianism of the poets often took the form of Petrarchism. Nor was Petrarchism among the French confined to the imitation of Petrarch alone. It was more likely to be the imitation of often inferior Italian Petrarchists copied even in their mannerisms.

The social and intellectual environment of the Pléiade was courtly and scholarly. At the Collège de Coqueret and in the university at large the humanistic writers came in contact with the learned professors of the day from Daurat himself to Tusanus and Danès. In the train of Lazare de Baïf and of members of the Du Bellay family they met men of culture from all Europe, particularly Italy. In the environment of learned patronesses like Marguerite de Berry they were encouraged in their erudite cult of the Muses. Moreover, in the court circles they were surrounded by a spirit of neo-chivalry instigated by Francis I, developed by Henry II and stimulated by the *Amadis de Gaule*. There was an atmosphere of social Platonism with a poetical cult of woman, partly due to literary traditions of chivalry, partly attributable to the influence of Italy.[1] For Italy was omnipresent, whether in theories of education derived from the Italian humanists, and of good manners and social intercourse drawn from Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, or in the poetic influence of the Petrarchists, of Sannazaro or of Italian writers resident in France, such as Luigi Alamanni. Partly in imitation of Italy the mediæval type of fortress like Langeais was yielding to the new order represented by Chambord, Chenonceaux, Amboise or Azay-le-Rideau. Leonardo da Vinci and Benvenuto Cellini came to France, and Fontainebleau was decorated by Rosso and Primaticcio. The elaborate mythologizing of the School of Fontainebleau in art corresponds to the literary paganism of the Pléiade. If critics are correct in drawing a parallel between the florid style of the *rhétoriqueurs* and the flamboyant architecture of the late Middle Ages, we are no less justified in applying the term "stucco classicism" to at least some of the writings of Ronsard.[2]

It was in such an environment that the theories of the Pléiade took form. Philosophically this sixteenth-century classicism is to a considerable degree Platonic and is less entangled with Aristotelian formalism and the cult of the rules than the seventeenth-

[1] Cf. the writings of E. Bourciez, Maulde la Clavière, A. Lefranc, etc.

[2] On these topics see Tilley's *Dawn of the French Renaissance*.

century classicism. It is the expression of those Platonic moods which saw in the poet the inspired interpreter of the Gods, and in poetry a reminiscence of a more perfect ideal of art.[1] Yet, though the poet is born and not made, he is not thereby exempt from toil and endeavor. To an age thoroughly convinced of the dignity of learning the poet was as industrious a craftsman as the pedagogue or mechanic.[2] In fact to many people poetry was a form of erudition, and every member of a learned class, the advocate, the physician, the teacher, thought himself qualified to be a ποιητής and to write verse.

The theories of the Pléiade are set forth chiefly in the *Défense* and the preface to the *Olive* of Du Bellay, in Ronsard's *Abrégé de l'art poétique* and the prefaces to the *Franciade*. They amount to this: Write in French and assimilate the ancients, for so the spirit of antiquity will be brought into French. Advice for the attainment of such an end is set forth very unsystematically in these writings. The chief source that is of value for us is of course the *Défense*. Much of the *Abrégé de l'art poétique* is merely of technical interest, and relates to points of versification, even of pronunciation; the discussions of the *Franciade* concern the epic. The preface of Du Bellay's *Olive*, however, almost contemporary with the *Défense*, develops still more the theory of imitation. So we are justified in taking the writings of Ronsard and of Du Bellay as a whole, and we get practically the same conclusions.

We find, therefore, mainly in the *Défense et Illustration* that:

Firstly, the French language has been unjustly treated and deemed unworthy of comparison with the languages of the ancients. Let us *defend* it.

Secondly, it may be improved and made more *illustrious*.

French, then, is not barbarous: "ne doit estre nommée barbare"; and we may remember that, years before, Lemaire de

[1] Cf. Rosenbauer, *Die Poetischen Theorien der Plejade.*

[2] Du Bellay's *Défense*, Part II, ch. 3, *Que le naturel n'est suffisant à celuy qui en poësie veult faire œuvre digne de l'immortalité.*

Belges had spoken of " la langue française que les Italiens nomment barbare, mais non est." For, though it lacks the wealth of Greek and Latin, this is due to the neglect of those who failed to cultivate it but let it grow like a rank weed. French is far from lacking good qualities, and it may be improved still more by contact with the classics of Greece and Rome. In the *Défense*, Du Bellay reproduces Quintilian's theory, which represents imitation as the chief principle of invention.[1] In the preface to the *Olive*, Du Bellay emphasizes the theory of imitation but gives it more independence. Let the imitation be intelligent, let it be the absorption of the qualities of the languages of the past, so that the results may be new and original.[2] The mind of the writer may well be impregnated with the words of the ancients, so that these shall be the language of his thoughts, the natural way of expressing what goes on within him. Consequently we may avoid translations, which, though useful to those who have no familiarity with foreign languages, are ineffectual. Renew above all the tactics of the old Romans face to face with the Greeks. " How were they able thus to enrich their language, so as to make it even almost equal to Greek ? By imitating the best Greek authors, transforming themselves into them, devouring them, and after having thoroughly digested them, converting them into blood and sustenance, each one keeping before him according to his own nature and the subject he wished to choose, the best author, whose rarest and most exquisite qualities they diligently ob-

[1] The ideas of Du Bellay in the *Défense*, however much they go back ultimately to Plato, Quintilian and Horace, came more directly from the Italian Sperone Speroni. Cf. P. Villey, *les Sources italiennes de la Défense et Illustration de la langue françoise*. See, for instance, pp. 71 ff. for Italians who wrote on imitation; p. 71 for Italians who had argued in " defense " of Italian. — Du Bellay deals with the poet particularly because Dolet had dealt with the *orateur*. Cf. Chamard's edition of the *Défense*, p. 161, n. 4.

[2] As Du Bellay expresses it in the preface of his *Olive*: " Si, par la lecture des bons livres, je me suis imprimé quelques traits en la fantaisie, qui après, venant à exposer mes petites conceptions selon les occasions qui m'en sont données, me coulent beaucoup plus facilement en la plume qu'ils ne me reviennent en la mémoire, doit-on pour cette raison les appeler pièces rapportées ? "

served, and applied and grafted them, as I have said before, to their language." [1]

The second part of Du Bellay's argument is an attempt to show how the French language may be improved so as to express more fittingly those qualities of which it is capable. Thus he enters upon a haphazard discussion of various features of French and advises the poet with regard to *genres*, choice of words and similar matters. But everywhere the trumpet note is heard exhorting Frenchmen to use their own language, and it bursts forth in a shrill call in the famous and often quoted passage: "So then, Frenchmen, advance boldly against that arrogant Roman state; and, with its captured spoils, as you have done more than once, adorn your temples and your altars. Fear no more those cackling geese, that proud Manlius, that traitor Camillus, surprising you in good faith off your guard counting the ransom of the Capitol. Assail that false Greece and sow there once more the famous nation of the Gallo-Greeks. Pillage without scruple the sacred treasures of the Delphic temple, as you did of yore, and fear no more the mute Apollo, his false oracles or his blunted arrows. Remember your ancient Marseilles, a second Athens, and your Gallic Hercules, drawing nations after him by their ears with a chain attached to his tongue."

Ronsard's views are in harmony with these exhortations to study the ancients and to renew their spirit in French. Thus in the *Abrégé de l'art poétique* he tells us that a prime requisite is to have grand and soaring conceptions. *Car le principal point est l'invention.* Invention is due to natural endowment and to the study of the ancients. So the poet must studiously read good poets. To a knowledge of Greek and Latin he must add his own French language, the more dear to him because it is his mother tongue. He may use it even to the extent of reviving old-fashioned phrases, technical words or dialectal terms drawn from all parts of the land.

[1] *Défense*, Book I, ch. 7.

Such is the doctrine of innutrition or of assimilation which is at the foundation of French classicism, and which we may say to have been even more consistently followed in the sixteenth than in the seventeenth century. Perhaps the most often quoted illustrative passage is from André Chénier's poem *l'Invention*:

> Changeons en notre miel leurs plus antiques fleurs;
> Pour peindre notre idée empruntons leurs couleurs;
> Allumons nos flambeaux à leurs feux poétiques;
> Sur des pensers nouveaux faisons des vers antiques.

There are, however, many other corroborative passages scattered through literature. In the sixteenth century itself excellent specimens of the same argument can be found in Montaigne's essays *Du Pédantisme* and *De l'Institution des Enfants*. We are too ready, says Montaigne in the first of these essays, merely to borrow the wisdom and learning of others. We should make these our own: " What does it avail to have a belly stuffed with food, if that food cannot be digested and transformed into us, if it does not strengthen and fortify us ? " Perhaps as vivid a way of putting it as we can find are the words used by Sir Joshua Reynolds in his fifth *Discourse*, speaking of the French classicist painter Nicolas Poussin: " He studied the ancients so much that he acquired a habit of thinking in their way, and seemed to know perfectly the actions and gestures they would use on every occasion."

CHAPTER IV

THE FORMS OF SIXTEENTH-CENTURY CLASSICISM

The Pléiade was desirous of reviving the literary forms of the ancients and of creating new ones worthy of the old. In Ronsard especially we find, with the exception of tragedy, examples of all phases of the new classicism.

Ronsard is to be called chiefly a lyric and elegiac poet, though one not content with the lyricism in a minor key of the writers of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance. Consequently, though we find him at certain periods of his life falling into the insignificant trifles of a court poet, yet his chief desire was to become the inspired prophet of France. In this he showed his " Platonism." Looking back even beyond his favorite Horace among the ancient poets he perceived the Greek Pindar, who seemed half priest of men, half interpreter of the Gods. So, with perhaps some hints from the poems of Luigi Alamanni, Ronsard tried to introduce the Pindaric ode as the noblest expression of lyricism. He had the field, indeed, much to himself, for Pindar was a new poet to the modern world, and is even now one of the most difficult authors of antiquity to decipher, one whose odes have often been taken on trust unread as a combination of obscurity and sublimity.

But Pindar was not the only majestic figure in ancient literature, nor were his poems the only ones to impress the world. Homer was as striking a character as Pindar and no less deserving of imitation. So Ronsard must reproduce Homer and those other seemingly great names of Greek poetry, Theocritus and Apollonius Rhodius, the author of the Alexandrian epic the *Argonautica*. To these was added the Roman Virgil. Virgil was preëminent in more than one *genre*, in pastoral as well as in epic poetry. Hence came the Theocritean-Virgilian pastorals and the

epic of Ronsard. Finally, the Italians no less than the ancients had had demi-gods, and Petrarch and Ariosto were models of Ronsard. So we can divide his *genres* into five chief divisions: odes, sonnets, epic, pastorals, elegies. Nearly all his important writings can be brought under one of these five heads.

The odes of Ronsard are of three kinds: Horatian, Pindaric and Anacreontic. Early in life he had composed odes in imitation of Horace and continued to love him. Later he was smitten with the Pindaric fever, and after the publication in 1554 by Henri Estienne of the pseudo-Anacreontic poems, Ronsard, in common with all the poets of his day, fell a victim to Anacreontism.

Nothing is easier than to compare the Horatian strain in Ronsard with the epicureanism of Horace. Horace, in his turn inspired by the Greeks, does not ask for much. Let him only live on his Sabine farm, among country sights and sounds, far from the hubbub of Rome. He does not dwell in a palace, he loathes Oriental pomp, and asks but for fresh air and summer breezes, with enough to eat and drink. Leave him with sweetly prattling Lalage and, heedless of the gods of mythology, as the years go by he will live in the present, unmindful of the future. All this is far better than to imitate Pindar; for, as Horace says, such a one is apt to fly aloft with waxen wing and, like Icarus, bestow his name upon a sea.

Such is the epicureanism of Horace. The merit of Ronsard is to have reproduced successfully the same feelings, and to have seen in the little Loir the Anio, in the " Fontaine Bellerie " the Bandusian spring, and in the forest of Gastine the country about Tibur.

The Anacreontic qualities are not absolutely separable from the Horatian ones. Here, in a more luscious and hedonistic setting, Ronsard gives utterance to motives of love, wine and song, of active physical enjoyment, rather than of contentment with a modest fortune.

Ronsard did try also to emulate Pindar and soar on waxen wing. At an early period, before the Anacreontic stage, he sought to

work himself into the mystic frenzy or enthusiasm expressive of the divinity, which according to him indicated the true poet. For the poets of antiquity were to him demi-gods or heroes " non tant pour leur divin esprit qui les rendait sur tous admirables et excellens," he says in his *Abrégé de l'Art poétique*, " que pour la connaissance qu'ils avaient avec les Oracles, Prophètes, Devins, Sibylles, interprètes de songes, desquels ils avaient appris la meilleure part de ce qu'ils savaient. Car ce que les Oracles disaient en peu de mots, ces gentils personnages l'amplifiaient, coloraient et augmentaient, étant envers le peuple ce que les Sibylles et Devins étaient en leur endroit." [1]

Ronsard thought himself fitted to reproduce the Pindaric qualities and interpret the muses to a new civilization. With punctilious exactness he undertook to reproduce the spirit and setting of Pindar, including the formal structure of strophe, antistrophe and epode so difficult to express in the French language with its slight stress and varying accent. Thus he chose a great man, the king, the Cardinal de Lorraine, the Chancellor Michel de l'Hospital as hero. Then, cramming the piece with mythological or historical allusions he sought a noble disorder, which consisted in concealing the filiation of ideas and in counterfeiting poetic frenzy. The sentences might be simple, but their union was hard to grasp. All this seemed, at any rate for a time, a merit to Ronsard, who had been taught by Daurat to admire Lycophron, the most obscure of Alexandrian poets.[2] We see that the sixteenth-century classicism

[1] Ronsard saw in the poet a demi-god, Malherbe and Boileau a man. Ronsard was not of the opinion of those mentioned in the last chapter who thought all learned men could be poets: " Il disait ordinairement que tous ne devaient témérairement se mêler de la poésie, que la prose était le langage des hommes, mais la poésie était le langage des dieux, et que les hommes n'en devaient être les interprètes s'ils n'étaient sacrés dès leur naissance et dédiés à ce ministère." — Binet's *Vie de Ronsard*. See Gaiffe's edition of the *Art poétique* of Sebillet (Sibilet), p. 8, n., for reference to passages on the divinity of Poesy. To Sebillet the list of inspired bards contains names ranging from Moses, David and Solomon to Homer, Hesiod and Pindar.

[2] " C'est un méchant tour que lui ont joué là ses réminiscences de Callimaque, de Lycophron, de Virgile, d'Horace, de Claudien, et surtout du Byzantin Marulle." — Laumonier, *Ronsard, poète lyrique*, p. 341.

was far from laying stress on the clearness and logic which were so important to the seventeenth century.

The Pindarism of Ronsard found few imitators. It was a single mood in his own career, and its soaring strain was above the reach of even his contemporaries. On the other hand, the Horatian and Anacreontic odes, original or imitated, were cultivated in abundance by the poets of the Pléiade. Belleau, Baïf, Olivier de Magny, and others tried adaptations of the Anacreontic poems, and the Horatian versions of Olivier de Magny are in spirit among the best in French literature.

The sonnet literature of Ronsard and of his fellow-poets is far less classical in its manfestations. Though they borrowed the frequent title of their collections (*Amours*) from the *Amores* of Ovid, yet here they tended most specifically to imitate the Italians and to run riot among the exaggerations of Petrarchism. Ronsard in his sonnets to Hélène, Du Bellay in his romantic melancholy among the ruins of Rome, or in his satire of the corrupt modern Rome, give examples of successful poetic *invention*, but the vast majority of these love-poems represent the deliberate choice of a real or imaginary woman as a literary object. Said Etienne Pasquier: "Lorsque nos poètes discourent le mieux de l'amour, c'est lorsqu'ils sont moins atteints de maladie." This is a very different frame of mind, indeed, from the sufferings in verse of a Musset:

> Mais j'ai souffert un dur martyre,
> Et le moins que j'en pourrais dire,
> Si je l'essayais sur ma lire,
> La briserait comme un roseau.

It explains, too, why poets could of their own free will after a time reject the Petrarchistic mood,[1] as Du Bellay,

> J'ai oublié l'art de pétrarquiser.[2]

Yet, none the less, the sonnet-literature of the sixteenth century, written as much to be sung as read, is the most fertile expression

[1] Petrarchism may be a form of Platonism, but it is very concrete and sensuous, sometimes erotic.

[2] *Contre les Pétrarquistes.*

of the poets of the time. But the writers are there modern rather than ancient, and the *Basia* or " Kisses " of the Dutch neo-Latin poet Secundus, or Bembo and Marullus, are to Ronsard as worthy of imitation as Propertius or Catullus. Indeed, Du Bellay is at his best when he assimilates lines by Navagero, the Italian Latin writer of the Renaissance.

The sixteenth-century epic, as cultivated by Ronsard in his unfinished *Franciade*, is as unsuccessful as the Pindaric experiments. Here, again, Ronsard imitated instead of assimilating. Very different, in spite of its invective, was the personal feeling of the Huguenot epic satirist Agrippa d' Aubigné in his *Tragiques*. Different too, in the sincerity of its religious feeling, was the epic on the Creation by the unjustly derided Du Bartas.

To the sixteenth-century classicist the epic was the result of long incubation. The more laborious and involved a poet, the better he seemed suited to express epic qualities. " Poetic " and *docte* or *savant* were nearly synonymous, and to Scaliger, Virgil was as superior to Homer as an illustrious matron to a woman of the people. Moreover, in the *Franciade* Ronsard scarcely shows good imitation, much less assimilation. It is often a weak *pastiche* of Greek and Latin authors, a cento of quotations smelling strongly of the midnight oil, and elaborately built up from Virgil and Apollonius Rhodius, helped out by Homer, Theocritus or a little of Ariosto. These passages manifest the author's application in translating rather than an appreciation of beauty. Ronsard crammed his poem full of episodes and descriptions extraneous to the general plan, whereby the action correspondingly lags.

Yet Ronsard was not acting in ignorance. In the first and second prefaces of the *Franciade* he distinctly states his theory concerning the heroic poem. His chosen model is Virgil. In the first preface he says, it is true, that " j'ai patronné mon œuvre plutôt sur la naïve facilité d'Homère que sur la curieuse diligence de Virgile." But he afterwards adds his praise of Virgil as " plus excellent et plus rond," and acknowledges that " j'allègue Virgile plus souvent qu' Homère."

In his epic Ronsard felt it his duty to take old annals of past times and treat the narrative with descriptions " imitating the effects of nature," according to Homer. Then, too, the poet must seek out his comparisons or similes, borrowing them from all the trades and professions with which Nature has honored man: " Ce sont les nerfs et tendons des Muses." Anything trivial or vulgar must be avoided, for Ronsard is in terror lest he should imitate, not " *les bons mesnagers* qui tapissent bien leurs salles, chambres et cabinets," but " les galetas où couchent les valets."

Clearly, then, Ronsard was no careless or inconsiderate composer, whatever the result, and he was really applying with great elaboration his usual theories upon the formation of a new *genre* to the epic as well as to the ode. In fact, it was the punctiliousness with which he followed the rule of thumb, instead of trusting to inspiration, that makes the *Franciade* so mechanical.

Finally, Ronsard yields to the moralizing tone, partly at the king's desire, who wanted each monarch portrayed in the *Franciade* to be an object lesson to him. Herein we see a tendency which is even much more marked in the seventeenth-century epic, that of using the heroic poem as a vehicle for moral instruction.

It was in pastoral poetry that Ronsard and his fellows did some of their best work. Theocritus was one of his favorite poets, and the Alexandrinism of the Dorian muse of Sicily, with its touch of artificiality, combined well with the refinements of Virgil. The modern humanists were fond both of the Virgil of the *Eclogues* and the Virgil of the *Aeneid*, and pastoral literature had been cultivated by Petrarch, Mantuan, Poliziano and Sannazaro. Thus the sixteenth-century eclogue in France reproduces in a rather bookish way, but not without great charm, the rustic sights and sounds of the sophisticated poems of Theocritus, the whispering trees and sighing winds, the flowers and shrubs, the humming bees and singing birds. But, largely through the influence of the semi-allegorical Virgilian eclogue, French pastoral poetry, even in Marot, is also allegorical in tendency. Both Marot's eclogue of Pan and Robin and those of the Pléiade roughly satisfy Sebillet's

definition of the eclogue, as a dialogue in which appear shepherds and " gardeurs de bêtes," telling in pastoral terms of deaths of princes, calamities, changes of nations, outcomes of fortune and so forth, in such a transparent way that the truth may be read behind the allegory. In the following century Boileau criticized Ronsard for the uncouthness of his eclogues and for making his shepherds speak " comme on parle au village." As a matter of fact the eclogues of Ronsard are as aristocratic as the rest of the literature of the Pléiade, and the shepherds and shepherdesses who appear under the names of Carlin or Margot are no other than kings and princesses. Nor did Ronsard, like Spenser, manufacture artificial rustic archaisms to give a factitious air of the country to his idyls. Ronsard's pastorals would have been as much at home at Versailles as the *Art poétique* of Boileau. Moreover, they are among his best work, for he did have that appreciation of nature which made him seize the apt epithet, as the *bruit enroué* of falling waters.

Ronsard's love of nature shows itself, sometimes in a less formal manner, in his elegies, a miscellaneous collection, not always answering to our English conception of the term, but in whose tender sentiment, keen passion, or dreamy melancholy one finds many of those characteristics which made Sainte-Beuve see in the Pléiade the ancestors of the Romanticists. The elegiac qualities of Ronsard are, however, also scattered through his other *genres*.

The lyricism of Du Bellay differs from that of Ronsard in being less ambitious, and correspondingly more personal and natural. But it is particularly in his satire that he takes the lead in the new classicism. Ronsard's *Discours des misères de ce temps* are in a strain of lofty rhetoric and patriotism, so that some critics think they discern here his best work. Du Bellay's *Poète courtisan* is an example of classical satire such as Regnier or Boileau will cultivate, and very different from the uncouth *coq-à-l'âne* or " pillar-to-post " poem, or even the satirical epigrams of Marot. Du Bellay's attacks on the corruption of Rome reach the bitterness of the Archilochan iambus, though they do not appear in the guise

usually connected with the satire of Juvenal. It will remain for writers like Vauquelin de la Fresnaye and Mathurin Regnier to acclimatize, with the help of the Italians, the methods of Horace and Juvenal.

The classicism of the sixteenth century is chiefly characterized by the lyrical element, just as drama preponderates in the seventeenth. But the drama was cultivated in the sixteenth century as well. Here we note a peculiar phenomenon. The authority of Aristotle had been discarded by the humanists and poets together in favor of the cult of Plato. Yet, as his influence diminished in literature and thought as a whole, it began to *increase* in the drama. The Italian critics, from Trissino to Castelvetro, had expounded a somewhat misunderstood Aristotelianism, in which ideas never originally expressed by Aristotle as to the three unities were formulated, attributed to him and applied, with assistance from Horace, to the content of tragedies based on Seneca. These efforts the French continued from the days of Jodelle to Garnier and Montchrétien. In 1572 Jean de la Taille enunciated the doctrine of the three unities as distinctly as Boileau did in the following century. In comedy the imitation of Plautus and Terence was combined with that of Italian writers of comedies, Ariosto and others. For the most part the French tragedies consisted of rhetorical tirades elaborating a suffering supposedly tragic or *atrox*. They lacked a well developed plot and psychology, and unity of action in the modern sense was apt to be wanting. One member of the Pléiade, Jean-Antoine de Baïf, tried in his Academy of Poetry and Music to revive the elements of dance and song and to enrich the choral ode of modern tragedy so as to bring it nearer to the Hellenic one. Posterity has laughed at him for his pains and unjustly derided him as a pedant.

If we look for typical expressions of the poetic theory of the sixteenth century, we find them in the *Arts of Poetry* of Sebillet, Peletier du Mans and Vauquelin de la Fresnaye, as well as the *Défense* of Du Bellay. The *Art poétique* of Sebillet expresses, indeed, mainly the ideas of the school of Marot. The *Défense* of

Du Bellay is, in a large degree, a retort to Sebillet, his eulogy of Marot, Saint-Gelais, Héroët and Scève, his audacity in speaking in one breath of Saint-Gelais, Pindar and Horace or of Marot, Theocritus and Virgil, and in devoting so much attention to metrical forms like the rondeau, ballade, *coq-à-l'âne*, or enigma.

The *Art poétique* of Peletier du Mans, of 1555, expresses in many ways the ideas of the Pléiade itself at the time of its glory, though Peletier appreciates Marot more than does the new school, and is ready to give him credit for what he did or might have done. He scorns, however, many of the literary *genres* which brought success to the school of Marot. His chief interest is in the forms to which the new school attached itself: the epigram, the sonnet, the ode, the epistle, the elegy, satire, comedy, tragedy, epic.

It is, however, particularly in the *Art poétique* of Vauquelin de la Fresnaye that we find registered the fully developed ideas of the sixteenth century on poetry. In some respects, even, it is not thoroughly representative of the Pléiade because it goes beyond it chronologically and has a wider survey. Begun in 1574, it was published in 1605. Therefore it harks back well into Ronsard's lifetime, and yet it has perspective. From its chaotic cantos we can, none the less, understand how the *genres* had crystallized to the mind of an intelligent critic, and what were the models held in esteem. The *Art poétique* of Vauquelin de la Fresnaye is a dull-useful handbook of sixteenth-century classicism.

Vauquelin claims as models Aristotle, Horace, Vida and Minturno, of whom the two latter had themselves based their works on the ancient writers. The influence of Minturno is rather slight, and Vida furnished Vauquelin chiefly with figures of poetic expression. Horace has passed entirely into Vauquelin with the addition of allusions to contemporary literature. Aristotle adds stability and dignity, so that in Vauquelin, as in the other late sixteenth-century critics, we find codified what in Ronsard and his contemporaries is more or less spontaneous.[1]

[1] Cf. G. Pellissier's introduction to the *Art poétique* of Vauquelin de la Fresnaye, pp. 41 and 42.

To Vauquelin Art and Nature are both necessary in poetry.[1] The poet is divine and a certain *ravissement* and frenzy accompany the invention of poetry:[2]

> Les vers sont le parler des Anges et de Dieu,
> La prose des humains: Le Poète au milieu
> S'élevant jusqu'au ciel tout repu d'ambroisie
> En ce langage écrit sa belle poésie.[3]

The chief types are:

The Epic, which describes the wars and wanderings of mighty peoples. Its models are Homer, Virgil, Statius, Apollonius, Ovid, Tasso, Ronsard. The epic is a picture of life in which we can find moral instructions. It is written in verses of ten or twelve syllables and should be limited in time to a year.[4]

The Sonnet, a modern form, though credited to Italy is, says Vauquelin, of French origin derived from the troubadours. Ronsard gave it new vogue, Du Bellay devised the epigrammatic or satirical sonnet, Desportes expressed in his sonnets softness and gentleness.[5]

The Ode, as restored by Ronsard, is serious and dignified and addressed to lords and ladies. The models should be Pindar, Horace. For the lighter ode or *odelette* seek Anacreon or Sappho.[6]

The Elegy is by French acceptation melancholy. The model should be Propertius.[7]

A Tragedy is a tale of woe, treating a topic of terror or pity. It has five acts and three characters at once. It obeys the unity of time. The chorus gives good counsel in sententious style. The guides are Sophocles, Euripides, Seneca, and the topics should preferably be drawn from a remote age, though Vauquelin does not absolutely prescribe Greece and Rome.[8]

[1] Cf. Book I, 55–56, 159–160; Book III, 905–916.
[2] Book I, 91–118.
[3] Book III, 29–32.
[4] Book I, 413 ff; Book II, 254.
[5] Book I, 565 ff.
[6] Book I, 651 ff.
[7] Book I, 515 ff.
[8] Book II, 445; Book III, 153; Book II, 461 ff; Book II, 255–258; Book II, 467 ff; Book II, 1107 ff.

Comedy is, like tragedy, subject to the rules and is a presentation of some mean deed, which may, however, be remedied:

> La comédie est donc une contrefaisance
> D'un fait qu'on tient méchant par la commune usance,
> Mais non pas si méchant qu'à sa méchanceté
> Un remède ne puisse être bien apporté:
> Comme quand un garçon une fille a ravie
> On peut en l'épousant lui racheter la vie.[1]

Vauquelin alludes to the new Tragi-comedy, a tragedy with a happy ending.[2]

Pastoral poetry should follow Theocritus, Virgil and Sannazaro.[3]

To the didactic poem and formal satire Vauquelin himself contributed as much as anyone in the sixteenth century, by his *Art poétique* itself and his Horatian satires, though Ronsard and Du Bellay composed satirical poems, and Regnier is the great example of the formal satirist. The Horatian epistles or *sermones* Vauquelin does not distinguish much from satire.

[1] Book II, 255 ff.; Book III, 111 ff.
[2] Book III, 163 ff. [3] Book III, 223 ff.

CHAPTER V

RENAISSANCE CLASSICISM IN THE WORLD OF ACTION. PHILOSOPHERS AND MORALISTS OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY. TRANSITION TO THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

THE poet of sixteenth-century classicism was steeped in the sensuous moods of his lyrical models. If one seeks an ethical principle beneath his sonnets it is the epicureanism of Horace or the wine and roses of Anacreontism. The Platonism of the poets often veils a crude amorous Petrarchism in which philosophical terms occasionally appear for display. Rarely, as in Ronsard's *Discours des misères de ce temps*, does the poet become a preacher. Those whose epics or satires have a moral strain, Agrippa d'Aubigné or Du Bartas, belong to the Huguenot faith and are, therefore, of less account in the formulation of French classicism.

The sixteenth-century theoretical writings are confined so much to poetry that people do not always realize the ethical aspects of the early classicism. As a matter of fact, moralists, except religious reformers, are not numerous until the latter part of the age. Yet sixteenth-century classicism is ethical as well as intellectual or artistic, and the theories of writers on morals are as distinctly the result of ancient doctrines and the product of humanism, as are the odes and lyrics of the Pléiade. It is because philosophical synthesis calls for more maturity than does poetry that we wait until a Montaigne for the complete type of the new moralist. The " Académie des Valois " testifies also to interest in moral philosophy towards the end of the century. But, though Montaigne's moral observations come fairly late, we can see, even before their publication, the philosophy of the humanistic classicism set forth by Pierre Ramus. We can also see its living example in the person of the great chancellor Michel de l'Hospital, — " that Hospital of France, than whom, I think," says Sir

Philip Sidney,[1] " that realm never brought forth a more accomplished judgment more firmly builded upon virtue."

The philosophy of the sixteenth-century humanist first takes the form of a revolt against scholastic authority and tradition, the influence of a misunderstood Aristotle linked with the teachings of the church, and the weight of obsolete textbooks in education expressing dull routine. Ramus voices the revolt in thought against the scholastic Aristotelianism, a revolt which he himself carried to injustice.[2] He took as his guide Plato and started out in youth to prove that everything attributed to Aristotle was both false and spurious. He linked the study of ancient literature with that of philosophy and sought the common processes of thought of both writers and thinkers. With him, as with the members of the Pléiade, the ancients are those who have best expressed the best thoughts, and in his scientific and philosophical works he uses their processes of thinking. In that sense it is to be noted that the philosophy of Ramus, though its effort was in some respects like that of Descartes in the next century, rested not so much on universal laws of reason as on those of certain human beings whose processes were conceived as universal. Thus the philosophy of Ramus, harking back instead of reaching forward, was not really a tool for the advancement of scientific truth, and by its deductive syllogistic disposition it still kept many of the defects of the debased Aristotelianism. Ramus dealt more with persuasion than with discovery.

None the less, by his efforts to improve the divisions of science and to renovate the study of them, Ramus made learning take a decided step forward. By his emphasis on method and the clear arrangement of material, Ramus made distinct progress towards what the seventeenth century considered its own supreme quality. The erudition of the sixteenth-century humanistic classicists was chaotic, their literary productions, from the *Défense* of Du Bellay to the essays of Montaigne or the *Art poétique* of Vauquelin de

[1] *The Defense of Poesy.*

[2] The best books on Ramus are Charles Waddington's *Ramus* and F. P. Graves's *Peter Ramus.*

la Fresnaye, were ineffective through incoherence. Long before Descartes, Ramus showed what greater effectiveness could be secured by better arrangement. His value in the whole history of the thought of his day is as an exponent of growing rationalism, under the patronage of Plato instead of Aristotle, as one who did more than any of his contemporaries to systematize learning, not merely in its technical aspects, but in its popular manifestations. Amid the chaotic erudition of the sixteenth century he tried to introduce orderly method. If modern historians of philosophy slight his name, it is because the foundations of his study rest, not on the categories of the human understanding, but on the perhaps fallible methods of persuasion of certain great men of antiquity.

The new philosophy of the sixteenth century was far from being purely intellectual. The age is permeated with moral reflection, though the true moralists of classicism belong to the second rather than to the first generation. The Reformation, until it became entangled with political problems, was chiefly a moral movement. The humanists of the Renaissance emphasized the third of three moral currents which were then powerful: the tradition of the Church, the return to primitive Christianity in the Reformation, the non-Christian or Pagan morality. Montaigne did much to acclimatize this last in France.[1]

The humanists, full of veneration for the ancients, reproduced the results of study in the different forms of the new literature. Some, like Baïf in his proverbs, evolved gnomic poems or fables; others, like Guy du Faur de Pibrac, wrote moral quatrains. The humanistic tragedy was liberally sprinkled with *sentences* or moral thoughts, often printed in brackets or quotation marks so as to emphasize their proverbial quality and the ease with which they could be separated from the context. Important influences were Plutarch, known in time through Amyot's translation, Stobaeus, Seneca, and among modern works the *Adages* of Erasmus.

[1] On the whole question of the influence of Montaigne, see Pierre Villey's important thesis, *les Sources et l'Evolution des essais de Montaigne*. See also P. Laumonier's article in the *Revue d'histoire littéraire*, vol. iii, *Montaigne précurseur du xvii^e siècle*.

In one especial way the moral teachings of the ancients were given currency. Indeed, to them we owe the origin of Montaigne's essays. This writer is the best example of the moralists of French humanism, by his rationalistic application of the principles of ancient philosophy to the conditions of modern times, by his moral psychology which makes him a precursor of the psychological moralists of the seventeenth century. The mediaeval vogue of fables, ancedotes and apologues had been continued by various compilations by the humanists. We need not seek prototypes of the *Essais* in such works as the *Discorsi* of Machiavelli. They are rather to be found in centos of anecdotes or didactic ethical collections corroborative or illustrative of moral maxims, which continued tendencies in certain ancient works, belonging intellectually rather to an Alexandrian than to a creative stage, as the writings of Stobaeus, Valerius Maximus and Aulus Gellius. In the sixteenth century, cullings of striking stories seemed an excellent way of continuing the ancient tradition. Thus we get the vogue of the *Disticha Catonis*, the *Anthology* of Stobaeus and the new *Adagia* of Erasmus. Directly connected with this vogue was one of terse and pithy sayings called apophthegms, linked with the names of Plutarch and again of Erasmus. Such collections received still greater development in the *Diverses leçons* (*Silva de varia lección*) of the Spanish writer Pedro Mexía, soon translated by Claude Gruget, or plundered by men like Pierre Bouaystuau.

Thus Montaigne's early essays are seen to be impersonal agglutinations of anecdotes illustrative of a moral observation. The material is derived entirely from books, and the illustrations are, in the vast majority of cases, ancient ones. The underlying moral principles which serve as a connecting link are equally cut-and-dried, and are derived from the current fashionable stoicism, drawn once again from communion with ancient writers like Seneca. Thus Montaigne's early essays are instances of modes of moral reflections then in vogue, which they tend to popularize and hand on to the seventeenth century.

Little by little Montaigne began to reflect on the true significance instead of the traditional import of morality. In spite of his inherited faith, he always tended to divorce religion from religious authority and to view acts in the light of reason, being thus sometimes led to conclusions, such as the justification of suicide, at variance with Christian lessons. He turned more to psychological analysis and judgment, illustrating his reflections by self-observation. To the guidance of the somewhat stilted Seneca he added the more human and personal Plutarch, as seen in the latter's *Lives* and particularly the *Moralia*. Though Plutarch attacked the stoics of his day, many of his observations are in the stoic mood; but he offers to Montaigne a standard more humanly realizable, and one seeming to show to Montaigne a being like himself. Soon this condition was complicated by reading the sceptical or pyrrhonist philosopher Sextus Empiricus and his *Hypotyposes*. The widening of the field of Montaigne's observation through Plutarch and his aversion for dogmatism, increased by the intolerance of both Catholics and Huguenots, made Montaigne himself pass through a brief period of pyrrhonism, which occupies a less considerable part of his life than has often been assumed since Pascal, and which finds its full expression in the *Apologie de Raimond Sebond*. In fact this pyrrhonism of Montaigne is not so much scepticism as a sense of relativism, or whatever we may call this form of the doctrine of suspended judgment. He is particularly hostile to the dogmatism of science and the products of reason. In this way Montaigne has reacted violently against the stoical rationalism of his earlier days.

But this mood was not a permanent one. The most characteristic form of Montaigne's thought is the moral psychology of man and his place in the world. This becomes more important to him than the stoical lesson or *exemplum* of his early days. It affords an outlet for his untiring curiosity about others, and about himself as an illustration of the average man, the subject of the rational positive moral life. Montaigne, like Molière, is a psychological realist.

Thus the humanist Montaigne has followed in his unconscious theory of morals an evolution somewhat in accord with the method of Du Bellay's *Défense*. After close study, not rising above imitation, of the ancients, particularly of the stoics, Montaigne, by greater communion, assimilated the spirit of pagan rationalism and acquired a view of life which has its influence on seventeenth century morals. He conceives man as the gentleman, the citizen of the world, the person of breeding and taste, averse to pedantry and eccentricity, with trained taste and judgment. The youth whose education is described in the *Institution des Enfants* anticipates the *honnête homme* of the seventeenth century.

It surely is not a fanciful proceeding if, in a gallery of great classicists of the sixteenth-century humanism, we make room, near Montaigne the easy-going observer, for Michel de l'Hospital, the upright moralist in action. It would be hard to find two men more dissimilar in many respects. Yet, if Montaigne is the product of one temperament in communion with the ancients, in Michel de l'Hospital we see how they have affected another temperament. If Montaigne dabbles in the thoughts of a moral realist, Michel de l'Hospital is the idealist trying to put his theories into practice. Montaigne is the critic, Michel de l'Hospital the statesman steeped in the learning of the humanists. He may seem an exception rather than an example in his bloodthirsty times. None the less we can call this noblest of Frenchmen the embodiment of an ethical classicism loftier than that of Montaigne. Moreover, he is not only the reformer of justice and the advocate of religious toleration but a man of letters himself.

From his student days at the University of Padua Michel de l'Hospital was the advocate of progress, whether in opposition to the crabbed Bartolists in law, or in furtherance of the new scholarship and literature. A follower of the Greeks and Latins, whether or not we call him a direct disciple of Seneca and the stoics, he was the encourager of Ronsard, who testifies, in his most ambitious Pindaric ode, to Michel de l'Hospital's achievements for the

advancement of learning. To his efforts was partly due the reconciliation by Margaret of Berry of Ronsard and Saint-Gelais.

In 1560 Michel de l'Hospital became chancellor of France and tried to put into operation the principles which guided his life: justice, tolerance and mercy. He may seem to have toiled in vain and to have seen for the time being his ideals made impossible of realization. He ended his life in semi-disfavor, yet he brought about various edicts and decrees of reform. His policy was the seed of that of the party of moderation in his own age, the *Politiques*, and expressed that mean of justice, or the *juste milieu* which, though it may seem ineffective to rabid revolutionary or to reactionary extremists, none the less is the truest form of liberty. Michel de l'Hospital tried to install reason and good sense as the expression of justice and respect for the convictions of others, even though in his attempt he satisfied neither Catholics nor Huguenots. He sought at the Colloque de Poissy to reconcile the warring factions, the edict of January for toleration was his work, and the Edict of Nantes was the culmination of his policy.

Michel de l'Hospital's life in his retreat at Vignay is that of the sage. There he lived studying his favorite authors, or composing those Latin verses which were the humanist's solace:

> Huc prima fero luce pedes, hic carmina condo,
> Aut aliquid Flacci relego, doctive Maronis,
> Nugarumve aliquid commentor, et ambulo solus,
> Instructis epulis coenatum dum vocet uxor.

Here it was that, secure in the sense of duty fulfilled, he was ready to give up life itself. After the massacre of St. Bartholomew, when told that mounted murderers were seeking him and asked if it would not be well to close the gates — "No," he replied, "if the small gate be not sufficient to admit them, then open the great one." Thus Michel de l'Hospital applies the principle of moral classicism to politics, and rests his theory of the state on justice.[1]

[1] "In Plato's words it is ἔρμα τῆς πόλεως, the link which binds society together, while injustice always brings ruin and disaster upon the states in which it is supreme." — C. T. Atkinson, *Michel de l'Hospital*, p. 159.

Himself learned and yet modest, he was the patron of humanist men of letters, the seeker for that righteousness which lies equidistant from the extremes of license and of oppression.

If one had asked Montaigne, whose writings contributed to the formulation of the type of the *honnête homme*, what men he would select as patterns of true nobility of character and as representatives of moral " classicism," he would probably have coupled the names of Michel de l'Hospital and of Etienne de la Boétie. To the former, indeed, Montaigne dedicated the works of La Boétie.[1]

In his relations with La Boétie, Montaigne saw perfect friendship. La Boétie died young and his writings were immature and fairly small in extent. Yet in them he illustrates or preaches ideas of significance for our point of view. The *Discours de la servitude volontaire* contains the views of a youthful utopian in a somewhat rhetorical style, but under classical inspiration and in the tone of stoicism he has given utterance to political liberty and brotherhood. The *Discours* is the most famous of La Boétie's writings, because it was taken as a programme for political parties. But another work, a mere translation, shows also the bent of La Boétie's mind. His version of the *Oeconomicus* of Xenophon, published with the title *la Mesnagerie de Xénophon* under the auspices of Montaigne, illustrates the interest felt, at least among thoughtful and sane men, for a life of justice and moderation in a peaceful environment.[2]

[1] " Ce léger présent, pour ménager d'une pierre deux coups, servira aussi, s'il vous plaît, à vous témoigner l'honneur et révérence que je porte à votre suffisance et qualités singulières qui sont en vous."

[2] " Sous l'influence salutaire des chanceliers Olivier et L'Hospital, on s'était mis à étudier le *ménage des champs*, comme on disait alors, et il était juste que le charmant traité de Xénophon retrouvât, après plus de quinze siècles, le même bienveillant accueil que l'antiquité lui avait fait jadis. Si nos pères aimaient l'agriculture, l'idéal de l'honnête homme, qu'il s'était formé à ce contact, avait plus d'un caractère commun avec l'idéal propre à Xénophon. Comme lui, ils aimaient la vertu facile, aimable, cettre sagesse enjouée faite de la modération des besoins et de l'honnêteté des désirs, que Xénophon avait prêchée et qu'il affirmait se rencontrer surtout à la campagne, dans un milieu paisible et sain." — P. Bonnefon, *Introduction* to works of La Boétie, p. 61.

Coincidently with the changes in political life and the advent of a new dynasty, French thought at the end of the sixteenth century undergoes sundry transformations. Sixteenth-century classicism lapses as a formal literary school. The Hellenism of Ronsard has come to naught and none of the tragedies of the Pléiade proves to be a masterpiece. The attention given to them in modern histories of literature has been an exaggerated one. The drama of the Pléiade is much inferior to its lyric poetry. We look for a period of chaos and the gradual formation of a new social environment for seventeenth-century classicism. Life and literature react upon each other. So the under-currents of thought must be kept in the reader's mind.

In the second half of the sixteenth century we have seen the stoical current to be strong in morals.[1] Amyot had popularized the biographies of heroes. Those who disapproved of an easy-going Epicureanism went to sources of inspiration in antiquity.

Prominent among the thinkers of the transition years was Guillaume du Vair.[2] This upright magistrate, who became late in life a bishop, belonged to the party of the *Politiques* and was a constant advocate of pacification under the aegis of royal authority. A reader of Seneca among the ancients and of the modern neo-Stoic author of the treatise *De constantia*, Justus Lipsius, professor of Leyden and Louvain, Du Vair proved, by his writings and his conduct, his desire to give new life to the ideas of antiquity. He is referred to by contemporaries as a stoic. He tried to enrich the literature of his country with the thought of the past and to apply the philosophy of old to the circumstances of to-day, thereby helping to place before the writers of the early seventeenth century the great principles of stoical morals.[3]

[1] Cf. L. Zanta, *la Renaissance du stoïcisme au xvi^e siècle.*

[2] Cf. R. Radouant, *Guillaume du Vair, l'homme et l'orateur jusqu'à la fin des troubles de la Ligue*; Cougny, *Guillaume du Vair.*

[3] " Tirer la philosophie de l'école pour la jeter dans la tempête des faits contemporains, lui donner pour tâche non plus de disserter sur les malheurs d'Hécube, mais de dégager le sens des événements d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, non plus de ratiociner sur les devoirs théoriques, mais de résoudre des cas de conscience actuels,

An older contemporary of Du Vair, Pierre Charron,[1] had even greater effect in disseminating the philosophy of antiquity. A less original thinker than Montaigne or Du Vair, he had the advantage of being more popular than Du Vair and more systematic than either. Therefore he had perhaps an even greater immediate effect. Charron borrowed some of the stoicism of Montaigne and of Lipsius, and even more of that of Du Vair, presenting his material in *la Sagesse* much more clearly and dogmatically. Charron, though a priest, borrows also from Montaigne some of his scepticism, which, again, he makes more positive. His scepticism is, in part, only a reaction against religious and scholastic formalism. But it tends to overthrow the dogmatism of revealed religion, to separate faith from morals, and to create an ideal of moral reason in which man is an end in himself.[2]

Thus Charron helped to carry humanism into practical morals and to establish a theory with which the divine sanction has little to do. The Renaissance, moreover, believed that nature is good and that the moral law is one which does not hinder but helps to develop our own energies. So to Charron morality does not depend so much on an outer will as on the law of man's own nature.

The stoicism of the late sixteenth century was eclectic and vague, but by that very fact it was likely to spread. Even when they are not followers of Montaigne or of Charron, or indeed of Du Vair, we find philosophers, moralists and men of letters of the first part of the seventeenth century showing stoical tendencies. The *libertins* thought the pyrrhonism of Montaigne and the scepticism of Charron a justification for severing the slight bond which Charron left between God and morals, and let the law of man's nature be a law of liberty or license. Others magnified and generalized the law of nature until they conceived a common or universal

enfin se mettre soi-même dans son œuvre, fût-ce sous des noms d'emprunt, avec ses découragements et ses doutes, cela, c'est le mérite propre de Du Vair. — Radouant, *Op. cit.*, p. 275.

[1] Cf. J. B. Sabrié, *Pierre Charron*; F. Strowski, *Pascal et son temps*, vol. i.; P. Bonnefon, *Montaigne et ses amis*; E. Zyromski, *l'Orgueil humain*.

[2] Of course this was not so felt in his own time and Charron was no heresiarch.

Reason. This Reason is at times near to religion, as in Balzac;[1] at times it is on friendly though distant terms, as in Descartes. Meanwhile, poets and dramatists preached stoical lessons. Malherbe consoled M. du Périer by reminding him that death comes to all; the heroes of Corneille are counterparts of the *généreux* of Descartes and of the old Romans of Balzac, "masters of themselves as of the universe." Descartes devising his method formulates a provisional moral code which has stoical elements. Even the Jansenists, whose mysticism is so remote from the cold reason of the independent moralists, were stoics in practice.

It would, however, be ridiculously inaccurate to consider stoicism in morals the only influence in early seventeenth-century thought. The environment in which the new classicism took form was affected by the great spiritual influences and conflicts, for the seventeenth century was, as to religion, one of the most active periods of French thought. The seventeenth century has been defined as *un siècle théologico-politique*.[2] The first half was characterized by the rise to power of the Jesuits, their struggle against the sway of Montaigne over the *libertins* and sceptics, their bitter rivalry with the Jansenists for supremacy in education and spiritual guidance. The second half of the century saw the firm establishment of the Jesuits in power, and also a tendency towards Gallicanism, a national church half independent face to face with the Vatican.

So as we study the seventeenth century we see the formation of a social environment, which presents, in spite of superficial differences, a strong unity from the first to the second half. The School of 1660 grows amid this environment.

[1] Balzac is by no means always a stoic. Cf. Sabrié, *les Idées religieuses de J.-L. Guez de Balzac*, pp. 137 ff.

[2] J. Denis, *Essai sur la littérature morale et politique du xvii^e siècle*, in *Mémoires de l'Académie de Caen*, 1891.

CHAPTER VI

GENERAL MANIFESTATIONS OF THE CLASSICAL PERIOD

We must consider the *milieu* in which classicism developed in the first half of the seventeenth century as influenced by at least four different forces: religion, affecting morals and education; philosophy, including science; politics and society. Let us examine them in turn.

The seventeenth century was marked by intense religious activity. The wars of religion had determined once for all the faith of the majority. The Huguenots were still an influential remnant in spite of the victories of Richelieu, and remained so until the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. But war and diplomacy so directed events that Bossuet and not Calvin provided the model for French religious rhetoric. Within the Catholic Church the Jesuits soon made themselves the dominant order.

Already in the sixteenth century the Jesuits had, by their infiltration in the country and by the establishment of schools, done much to strengthen their footing. They had been called traitors, because they were so closely connected with the League and because some of their writers were alleged to advocate regicide. They were banished from the kingdom in 1594. But, being readmitted in 1603, they identified themselves closely with royalty and were probably guiltless of Ravaillac's murder of Henry IV, for which they were blamed. They established themselves as court confessors, and Father Cotton was the first of a number of supple and determined men. As spiritual advisers they controlled the consciences of royalty and of nobility, and gave an only half-hearted support to Richelieu because he seemed overwilling to grant concessions to Protestant powers. Under Louis XIV they directed French politics, fought the Jansenists and

worked for the disastrous revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The Père de La Chaise, confessor of Louis XIV, was the most famous of these court Jesuits.

But it was not only on the minds of mature men that the Jesuits sought to act. Realizing that the most abiding impressions are those made upon the young, who preserve them through life, they devoted themselves with ardor to education. The Collège de Clermont was already famous in the sixteenth century, and, in the seventeenth, under the same name or that of Collège Louis-le-Grand, it counted its pupils by thousands. The College of La Flèche, where Descartes received his schooling, was another of the great Jesuit establishments.

The pedagogical methods of the Jesuits are important to consider, because they contributed so much to the formation of traditions which lasted in education almost to our own time. In addition to customs still recognizable in the *lycées* and *collèges* of today, like the boarding school *internat* and prolonged separation of pupil from family, they encouraged the study of rhetoric based on Latin. Latin was the language of the Church, as well as the ancestor of French. Consequently, pupils were taught it above all things. They had to speak Latin, to act modern Latin plays, to study the beauties of Latin rhetoric, to memorize selected passages from great Latin authors. Thus education was to a very great degree directed into aesthetic channels; ornate brilliancy was cherished and people cultivated " flowers " of rhetoric.

It must not, however, be supposed that Jansenism was without influence on French classicism. In Pascal, Racine and Boileau, in the *salon* of Mme de Sablé, and in the maxims of La Rochefoucauld may be seen different aspects of Jansenist doctrine and policy: determinism, the innate depravity of man, the need of grace, hostility to the Jesuits. Jansenism helped to express in words, though it did not create, the disillusionment which showed itself in the second half of the seventeenth century, due perhaps in part to the exhaustion of the nobility through duels, executions and the Thirty Years' War. This was like the *mal du siècle*

which in the nineteenth century followed the holocausts of the Empire.[1] It ranges from the worldliness of La Fontaine and the disenchantment of *le Misanthrope* and of *Don Juan* to the pessimism of Racine and the cynicism of La Rochefoucauld and of La Bruyère. Meanwhile the Jansenists tried as hard as the Jesuits to control the minds of the young, though they cultivated the *Garden of Greek Roots* rather than the flowers of Latin rhetoric. The Oratorians, too, were noteworthy instructors of youth.

Finally, even the *libertins*, whom we are apt, from the present use of the name, to associate with drunkenness and debauchery, with tavern life and immorality, must in some instances enter a survey of classicism. Many an *honnête homme* was at heart a sceptic and *libertin*, and Mr. Worldly Wiseman displayed his graces in *salon*, *réduit* and *ruelle*. Moreover, the chevalier de Méré and the duc de Roannez have the credit for smoothing Pascal's style and giving him " Atticism."

To philosophy and science the Jesuits, the Jansenists and the *libertins* all contribute varying elements. Outside of religion the nearest approach to metaphysics is in Descartes. The relation of Descartes to classicism is, it is true, a matter of dispute.[2] In his scientific method he admirably illustrates the qualities of clearness and of order which we associate with classicism, and Cartesianism was an intellectual fad among the learned ladies of seventeenth-century drawing rooms. But in his hostility to dogmatism, his aversion to tradition and to all that antiquity had transmitted, Descartes is one of the last to be connected with classicism.

In scientific investigation, particularly in physics or Natural Philosophy, Pascal is the chief name. The popular physics, such as the Jesuits taught, even as found to a certain extent in Descartes, or as expounded by Cyrano de Bergerac in his fantastic stories of

[1] Grandsaignes d'Hauterive, *le Pessimisme de La Rochefoucauld*, pp. 34 and 107.

[2] On this point see my *History of French Literature*, p. 321; Lanson, *l'Influence de Descartes dans la littérature française*, in the *Revue de Métaphysique*, 1896; Brunetière, in *Etudes critiques*: vol. iii. (*Descartes et la littérature classique*), vol. iv. (*Jansénistes et cartésiens*).

adventure, is a traditional one. The seventeenth century was not to a great extent an age of experiment. In fact, part of the hostility of the Jesuits to Pascal was because he upset accepted theories and revolutionized opinions.

Political causes were important in moulding French classicism. The age of Louis XIV, a centralized despotic government in which everything, including literature, contributed to the glorification of the monarch, was the result of the efforts of earlier rulers and ministers. Richelieu, in particular, by his subjugation of the Huguenots and of the recalcitrant nobility, by his successful participation in the Thirty Years' War, increased the prestige of royalty and gave it predominance in the state and in Europe. To this end men of letters were dragooned by pensions and gratifications into a band of dependent eulogists, much as in the great war of our day the German university professors have been made the partisan defenders of their government.

Richelieu promoted letters by the establishment of the Royal Press in 1640, but he used writers as tools in furthering his political plans. He encouraged Théophraste Renaudot's newspaper, the *Gazette*, as an organ of publicity and used the *Mercure François* in the development of what we should today call a subsidized press. But most important among his ways of controlling thought was the French Academy. Originally an informal gathering of friends, it was by Richelieu's efforts transformed into a court which, under his patronage, asserted control over the language and over the canons of taste, and by such documents as the *Sentiments* on the *Cid* helped to mould the French classical drama. Richelieu even planned a great institution for wits and men of letters, a sort of " Prytaneum of *belles lettres*," of which the Academy should be the guiding spirit, and which should be the haven of all who in his opinion deserved such honor.[1]

Richelieu's influence was even more specific, and contributed in no small degree to the vogue in the seventeenth century of the drama, and especially of the regular tragedy. He was intensely

[1] Cf. Ch. Arnaud, *l'Abbé d'Aubignac*, p. 198, note.

interested in the stage: for a while he encouraged the abbé d'Aubignac in his theories for the reconstruction of the drama; he had his band of five authors, including Corneille and Rotrou, who in collaboration wrote plays under his direction; he wrote, or it was whispered that he wrote, much of *Mirame*, which he brought out at lavish expense at a theatre made for the purpose in his own palace. In particular, he believed in the rules, and the discussion of the *Cid*, encouraged by him during his jealousy and hostility with regard to Corneille, not only had an effect on tragedy in general, but restrained the freedom of Corneille's own genius and influenced him in the composition of plays like *Horace* and *Cinna*.[1]

The Academy was an official body, but all society was divided into sets of greater or less formality. We do not hear the term *salon* employed as much at first as later, because the bedroom of the hostess was, in the earlier part of the century, still a gathering place; but the terms *ruelle*, *rond*, *alcôve*, *cercle*, show that the equivalent of the *salon* already existed. The *chambre bleue* of Arthénice, the " Saturdays " of Sappho are but the most famous of a long list which had, at different periods, hostesses like Mme des Loges, Mme d'Auchy, Mme de Sablé, the " Grande Mademoiselle," Mme de Bouillon, Mme de la Sablière, with differences of interest as fashions changed from preciosity to pedantry, from the politics of the Fronde to Cartesianism. In addition to gatherings of men and women, or the homes of fair courtesans like Marion de Lorme or Ninon de Lenclos, there were reunions of men alone. The Académie française had its origin in just such an informal coming-together, and more than one distinguished man, as Ménage or the Président de Lamoignon, liked to gather admirers

[1] " Cardinal Richelieu, who was undoubtedly the ablest statesman of his time, or perhaps of any other, had the idle vanity of being thought the best poet too: he envied the great Corneille his reputation, and ordered a criticism to be written upon the *Cid*. Those, therefore, who flattered skilfully, said little to him of his abilities in state affairs, or at least but *en passant*, and as it might naturally occur. But the incense which they gave him — the smoke of which they knew would turn his head in their favour — was as a *bel esprit* and a poet. Why ? — Because he was sure of one excellency, and distrustful as to the other." — Lord Chesterfield, Oct. 16, 1747.

about him. The abbé d'Aubignac planned his own private "Academy." Thus we see that the literature and the art of the seventeenth century were evolved in a setting of social groups, ranging in patronage from a prince or princess of the blood to a distinguished commoner, man or woman. At the Hôtel de Rambouillet there were lively diversions, picnics, jaunts into the country, practical jokes, as well as the rondeaux of Voiture or Julia's Garland; at Mlle de Scudéry's they tried madrigals, at the Grande Mademoiselle's "portraits"; the maxims of La Rochefoucauld were polished in the *salon* of Mme de Sablé. The learned Ménage fell in love like any fashionable fop with his fair pupils, made his erudition worldly, and exposed himself to ridicule as Molière's Vadius. Language was gallantly placed by Vaugelas under the guidance of the ladies, literature was witty and brilliant even in the Academy, and the man of letters tried to be a man of the world. Said Boileau:

> C'est peu d'être agréable et charmant dans un livre,
> Il faut savoir encore et converser et vivre.[1]

The society in which French seventeenth-century classicism developed was thus essentially aristocratic or, at least, leisurely. Literature was the delectation of refined and educated people. The jests of the Pont-Neuf were scorned, at any rate, in theory. At most, the burlesques and parodies of Scarron and his school were welcome, especially if, like the *Virgile travesti*, they presupposed a certain amount of scholarship. But Boileau banished all burlesque to the *plaisants du Pont-Neuf*. Drunkard and pickpocket might haunt the pit of the theatre, but the author, unless he were Molière, sought the favor of the pedants of criticism like

[1] "A company wholly composed of men of learning, though greatly to be valued and respected, is not meant by the words *good company*; they cannot have the easy manners and *tournure* of the world, as they do not live in it. If you can bear your part well in such a company, it is extremely right to be in it sometimes, and you will be but more esteemed in other companies for having a place in that; but then do not let it engross you, for, if you do, you will be only considered as one of the *literati* by profession, which is not the way either to shine or rise in the world." — Lord Chesterfield, Oct. 12, O. S. 1748.

Lysidas of the *Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes*, or the ladies who doted on the drama, such as Sestiane in the *Visionnaires* of Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin.

The *ruelles*, *alcôves* and later *salons* buzzed with discussions of the drama and of poetry in general. Works like Marini's *Adone*, Corneille's *Polyeucte*, Chapelain's *Pucelle*, Molière's *Ecole des Femmes* and Racine's *Phèdre* were judged by informal tribunals composed of both sexes, just as a formal court at the instigation of Richelieu set its verdict on the *Cid*. Consequently the influence of polite society was enormous. It opened its doors readily to any man of letters under the patronage of a prince or great nobleman. Under the spell of the sentimental romances, the origins of which went far back of *Astrée*, it formulated ideals of behavior and of courtship which found vent in the novels of Mlle de Scudéry, and which may be considered a form of social Platonism. Thus, too, we may in part account for the rise of preciosity, which was far from being merely an effort to *débrutaliser la langue*, but aimed also at a purification of manners. So fastidious did the *précieuses* grow that to Molière *précieuse* and *prude* were almost synonymous; so etherealized did their love become that Ninon de Lenclos called them the *Jansénistes de l'amour*.

Preciosity, it should be remembered, was not a closed society or coterie of fantastic women. Because of the fame of Molière's *Précieuses ridicules* and the vogue of its title many people seem to think that only women made up preciosity. There were *précieux* as well as *précieuses*. Linguistically the borders of preciosity are indefinable, since the artificial jargon shaded off into good taste and some of it was incorporated in the writings of great authors. The abbé d'Aubignac, high priest of the rules and of verisimilitude, was a *précieux*; the Père Bouhours was a friend of both Mlle de Scudéry and Boileau, and appreciated them both; the maxims of La Rochefoucauld were a result of the intellectual, if not linguistical, preciosity of Mme de Sablé's *salon*; Corneille indulged in "precious" figures; Racine made Pyrrhus woo Andromaque with the help of *pointes*. Even Molière himself,

wearing the spoils of Cathos and of Madelon, used in perhaps every one of his plays linguistic or rhetorical metaphors originating in preciosity. Preciosity, not ridiculous preciosity, forms, therefore, part of the early background of French classicism.

The literary society of French classicism based its standards in the first place on the dogma and traditions of antiquity. In the dramas of Euripides especially, modified by the Renaissance Senecan tendencies, in the legends and history of Greece and Rome it found material for its plays; in the writings of Quintilian, Horace and Longinus, influenced by pseudo-Aristotelianism, it found inspiration for critical discussions.[1] Pseudo-Aristotelianism held sway in many literary forms, particularly in tragedy. It came largely from Italian critics and commentators on Aristotle. They, in the sixteenth century, had formulated rules of tragedy vastly more precise than what Aristotle actually had said. These ideas, partially adopted in France in the sixteenth century itself, were in France forgotten, but were afterwards revived in prefaces and arts of poetry.

From Italy, too, and from Spain, came much of the actual material used by men of letters. Italy furnished sources for the pastoral romances, for comedy. Spain gave plots to plays and to stories, and above all supplied Corneille with the problems of conduct and the characters which, blended with stoicism, he portrayed in his tragedies.[2]

[1] Authority everywhere: in philosophy, Aristotle; in medicine, Hippocrates and Galen; in rhetoric, Cicero; in law, civil and canon law; in mathematics, Euclid and Ptolemy. See H. Gillot, *la Querelle des anciens et des modernes en France*, p. 281.

[2] J.-E. Fidao-Justiniani, in *l'Esprit classique et la préciosité au xvii^e siècle*, p. 30, suggests the influence of Italy and Spain in developing the political theories of Richelieu: "En général, les Espagnols de lettres ont plus contrarié, en France, le mouvement classique qu'ils n'y ont aidé. Il en va autrement des théologiens d'Alcalá ou de Salamanque. Mais après tout, l'influence des deux sœurs latines a été d'abord politique; et Machiavel un peu, mais surtout les nonces romains et les ambassadeurs de la Sérénissime République pour l'Italie, et, pour l'Espagne, cette lignée d'hommes d'Etat qui va de Ximénès à Antonio Pérez, voilà les véritables pères de l'esprit classique, qui furent, d'autre part, les maîtres avoués de Richelieu." — Barclay's *Argenis* was also said to be a political *vade-mecum* of Richelieu.

There is unity, as well as difference, in the relations of the two halves of the seventeenth century. The first portion shows a gradual working into shape, in spite of the opposition of many rebellious forces, such as Théophile and the *libertins*. The dramatic forms, at any rate, are more abundant and more free, and the plays of Corneille have about them much that belongs to romance as well as to realism. The sentimental novels are all the rage.

But, little by little, as the School of 1660 took form, the *vraisemblance* on which the dramatic critics laid stress became fashionable. Already *Cinna* and *Polyeucte* are more thorough psychological studies than the *Cid* or *Horace*. In Racine we get the completely realistic analysis of emotions, in which the poet's attention is devoted to character-study. Meanwhile the long, fantastic story, containing fine-spun but conventional descriptions of love, became the brief, realistic *Princesse de Clèves*. The development of the School of 1660 in the environment of its own age is that of a growing realism, assumed to be the portrayal of general characters and types true of all ages and all times. As vehicles for this literature there were gradually evolved a suitable language, philosophical and aesthetic principles of art and literature, definite literary forms, and dogmatic standards of criticism expressed in conventional terms used for the testing of intellectual works.

The School of 1660 was not an indiscriminate *pot pourri* of the elements described. The great classical authors formed a sort of group amid the successful writers of their time. They led, as a rule, rather than followed, the fashions of the *salons*; they crystallized literary theories which minor writers at their discretion imitated or neglected; they tried to study human nature in their books instead of writing fantastic unrealities; they assimilated, so far as circumstances allowed, the spirit as well as the letter of antiquity. Occasionally they seemed in their preferences opposed to the ancients: Malherbe, the idol of Boileau, disliked Pindar, Descartes swept away the whole past indiscriminately and thought it foolish to waste one's time over Rome. The line of demarcation

between the genuine *classiques* and the other writers cannot be made hard and fast, for the *classiques* came from the same environment but used better judgment. Outside, on the one hand was the humdrum and reactionary University, so immersed in dogma, routine and the blind worship of Aristotle, that Boileau wrote his *arrêt burlesque* banishing reason from the University; on the other hand was the superficial band of fine wits and poetasters, smart drawing-room versifiers and purveyors of flattery, poets of a rococo and florid antiquity which had no counterpart in real history. The classicists were in the minority and often on the defensive. Malherbe was not such a popular favorite as Théophile, or Racine as Quinault.[1] The most successful play of the century was not Pierre Corneille's *Cid* or Racine's *Andromaque* but Thomas Corneille's heroico-galant *Timocrate*.[2]

The transition years from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century saw the extreme degeneration of poetry in the Italianism of Desportes and his followers. Malherbe reacted from this state of affairs. For years France now devoted its best efforts to the improvement of style, whether in brilliant conversation and graceful repartee in the *cercles* and *ruelles*, or in written prose under the guidance of Balzac or Vaugelas, or in verse under Malherbe, though the sway of each was contested. Malherbe, who had begun by composing sorry Italianistic conceits, became, as his life reached its half-century, a dogmatic and fault-finding critic of poetry, exemplifying his own theories in majestic but cold and unimpassioned verse. Malherbe was the high priest of slow and painstaking composition, in which fancy and the free imagination were made to submit to the laws of " reason " and duty. Vigorous proscriptions were put in force against hiatus and overflow, cacophony, verse-padding; so that, together with its stoicism and its declamatory enunciation of general moral truths, Malherbe's

[1] Perrault wrote: " — M. Quinault que toute la France regarde présentement, malgré tout ce que vous avez dit contre lui, comme le plus excellent poète lyrique et dramatique tout ensemble, que la France ait jamais eu." Quoted in Berriat Saint-Prix's edition of Boileau, vol. iii, p. 169, n.

[2] On these matters cf. H. Gillot, *op. cit.*, *passim* and especially pp. 365–369.

verse became the model for the semi-official eulogies and academic compositions which accompanied the growth of royal state. Malherbe also began to distinguish between " good use " and " bad use " and to build up a " noble " language. He is often looked upon as the initiator of seventeenth-century classicism in poetry, and Boileau's " Enfin Malherbe vint " did more than one might realize to consecrate him as a founder. But he was far from being a blind worshipper of antiquity, for many of whose poets he had such scant respect.

The seventeenth century gradually evolved a prose style suited to its self-conscious dignity. The written language of the sixteenth century had been disjointed and welcomed increase of vocabulary. The seventeenth century used far fewer words and its constructions were more precise, even though its numerous incidental clauses with *qui* and *que* seem cumbersome today. In spite of the mockery of the Anti-Ciceronians ever since the days of Erasmus and others, the model of style was the rolling period of Cicero. True enough a reaction against him was visible in many writers,[1] but the teachers of French prose classicism were Ciceronian rhetoricians. Balzac, Coeffeteau, Patru, Perrot d'Ablancourt, Vaugelas, were the oracles of the day. The lawyer Patru, the " French Quintilian " of Vaugelas, exemplified the heavy side with what Sainte-Beuve called his *ore rotundo* style. Coeffeteau,[2] in his history of Rome and his translation of Florus, gave to his prose a polish which made Vaugelas take him for his chief authority; Perrot d'Ablancourt by his translations, the " belles infidèles," won an admiration which Boileau shows by linking him with Patru.[3]

But Balzac is the great reformer of prose, doing for it, as the hackneyed statement runs, what Malherbe did for poetry; Vaugelas recorded the good use of his day and handed on his sceptre

[1] Cf. Croll, *Juste-Lipse et le mouvement anti-cicéronien à la fin du xvi^e^ et au début du xvii^e^ siècle*, in *Revue du xvi^e^ siècle*, 1914.

[2] On Coeffeteau, cf. Ch. Urbain's *Nicolas Coeffeteau*.

[3] Satire IX, l. 290.

to the Père Bouhours; [1] Bossuet reached the climax of the soaring style for which Balzac had somewhat ineffectively groped. Meanwhile Descartes, busy with his "method," helped to give order and logic to French prose, though his own style was externally ponderous and cumbersome. Pascal, preoccupied like Descartes with thought, wrote the purest and most limpid prose of all. In both prose and verse, Voiture, in the first half of the century, cultivated an airy and whimsical manner, non-Ciceronian and verging on preciosity, which seems to cut him off from consideration in a study of the classical age, until we remember the admiration of Bouhours for him and recall his eulogy by the disciple of Boileau and the French classical school, Alexander Pope:

> Ev'n rival Wits did Voiture's death deplore,
> And the gay mourn'd who never mourn'd before;
> The truest hearts for Voiture heav'd with sighs,
> Voiture was wept by all the brightest eyes:
> The Smiles and Loves had died in Voiture's death,
> But that for ever in his lines they breathe.[2]

Balzac has been rather unfairly treated by posterity as a mere rhetorician. It is perfectly true that the subject-matter of most of his solemn and ornate letters and dissertations is now obsolete, that his *philautia* or self-esteem has done him more harm than good. But no less a person than Descartes admired him as a thinker,[3] while his far-reaching friendships and influence in his own day prove that, even though a Ciceronian rhetorician, his effect on the prose of his century was in the highest degree important. He gave utterance in well-balanced rhetoric, based on sound principles of taste, to the current ideas in religion, politics, literature and morals. He was not an original thinker, like Descartes

[1] "Bouhours, whom I look upon to be the most penetrating of all the French critics." — Addison, *Spectator*, No. 62.

[2] *Epistle to Mrs. Blount, with the Works of Voiture.* "Pope, in addressing ladies, was nearly the ape of Voiture." Hallam's *Literary History*, Pt. iii, ch. 7.

[3] "Le jugement le plus flatteur dont Balzac a été l'objet, non-seulement comme écrivain, mais aussi comme penseur est celui de Descartes." — Sabrié, *les Idées religieuses de J.-L. Guez de Balzac*, p. 13. He quotes the passage in question from Descartes's *Epistolae*, Amsterodami, 1668, pp. 332–334.

or Pascal, but he did more than any one had yet done in France to make the reading of prose an easy instead of a laborious task.

If the names of Malherbe and of Balzac are linked together at an earlier stage, so it may be said that Vaugelas in turn did for prose what Boileau did for poetry. Vaugelas was the chief of those seventeenth-century grammarians who, avoiding the pedantry of the sixteenth-century fallacious etymological linguistics, sought to be the registrars of noble style and of good taste in general. Vaugelas did not write a systematic grammatical treatise but wrote instead *Remarques sur la langue française*, nor would he even classify his remarks according to the parts of speech, in order not to have them seem like a grammar.

Vaugelas is a purist. He distinguishes between good use, the language of good writers and *honnêtes gens*, and bad use, which is turned over to burlesque, low comedy and satire. Good use is the way of speaking of the most sensible elements of the court in conformity with the practice of the best authors, and Vaugelas includes women as important elements of the court, hence of high value in judging matters of taste. His chief standard in written literature is Coeffeteau, but he adheres to the practice of the standard writers of his and the preceding generation: Malherbe, Balzac, Voiture, Chapelain, Perrot d'Ablancourt and Patru.

Thus Vaugelas is an empirical grammarian, more interested in the authorities of his own time than in the past. The effect of his teachings was to help the establishment of a courtly and polished language, dissevered from foreign influences, supercilious of provincial and dialectal perversions and deserving those epithets dear to English classicists of " elegant " and " judicious." [1] This style was not destined to the eternity which the seventeenth century imagined, but the *style noble* was suited to its purpose in those courtly days. It ran the risk of exaggeration. The sixteenth-century classicism of Ronsard admitted technical terms to poetry; the seventeenth-century classicism, as a result of the purists and

[1] On the doctrine of Vaugelas see the preface to Chassang's edition of the *Remarques*.

the fastidiousness of preciosity, sought only general terms, until contact with fact was missed and a thing was rarely called by its name. In time, periphrasis and circumlocution came so much into vogue that we understand the anger of the romanticists, Victor Hugo's advocacy of the *mot propre* and his pride in calling *le cochon par son nom.*

With the Jesuit critic, Father Dominique Bouhours, the "urbanity" praised by Balzac, as a quality of polished civilization opposed to "rusticity," gets still more emphasis. The urbanity of Bouhours has much of the smiling amenity with which his order made converts, his teachings like the language of his characters were suave,[1] his language was often flowery and his purism was often but *bel esprit.* For the classicism of Bouhours harks back not only to Vaugelas but to Voiture. Like Vaugelas he takes as guides good use and taste, which mean to him intercourse with *honnêtes gens* and the reading of good books. But his true hero is Voiture.[2]

Hence the ideals of Bouhours, dwelling on the middle heights, express the *general average* of good taste to the later seventeenth century: a language and style clear and smooth, more familiar than Balzac taught, perhaps a little too pretty to be always vigorous, intended as a medium for witty women and polished men.

If, however, instead of looking for the average manifestation of the *style noble*, we seek its best form, we find it in Bossuet. Here is the culmination of the rhetoric of Balzac, strong without bombast, individual without egotism, smooth without affectation, clear without weakness. Bossuet's sonorous eloquence, expressing no longer rhetorical platitudes, or a social *mièvrerie*, but great religious principles, is the fit embodiment of the intellectualism which gave France its leadership in Europe in the seventeenth century.

[1] Cf. Doncieux, *le Père Bouhours*, p. 30, n. 2: "Voyez les *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène* et *la Manière de bien penser*, où presque toujours les interlocuteurs questionnent, répliquent, interrompent 'en riant' ou 'en souriant.'"

[2] Doncieux, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

It was not enough to create a literary manner or style, as some of the more superficial rhetoricians evidently thought. The French classical age would mean but little to us, if it had been only a matter of words. Admittedly, even in the realm of general principles the predominating questions are the aesthetics of literature and of art. But underlying them were things more fundamental: reason, intuition, and the like. Pascal brought thought into non-technical literature and enriched its content. To him thought and style are inseparable. Similarly Descartes bequeathed a method.

The classical age is the school of Reason, but this reason ranges almost from a key to the riddle of the universe to the literary " good sense " of Boileau. The traditionalists continued to believe that the ancients had been the depositaries of reason, and that by following them as docilely as possible one could inherit the transmitted torch of knowledge and of enlightenment. The scholasticism of the mediaeval " Aristotle " was still the last word in method, the Latin authors were the orthodox masters of taste. The sceptics and Pyrrhonists among the libertines held their judgment in suspense as Montaigne had done or, like Gassendi, ventured no further in affirmation than the senses allowed. Pascal relied on the help of reason for positive science, but he showed almost the Pyrrhonist's disdain for it when he came to faith and the supernatural. Finally, Descartes set up a new reason common to all men and equal in them which, when put in possession of an infallible Method, can scorn past learning and experience and erect a new world of knowledge. Reason cannot make a false inference, thinks Descartes: mistakes are due to misuse of method.[1] It is by the discovery of such a method, he thought, that he had performed for humanity a supreme service. Logic and clearness of reasoning mean truth.

[1] " Le bon sens est la chose du monde la mieux partagée; car chacun pense en être si bien pourvu, que ceux-mêmes qui sont les plus difficiles à contenter en toute autre chose, n'ont point coutume d'en désirer plus qu'ils n'en ont. En quoi il n'est pas vraisemblable que tous se trompent; mais plutôt cela témoigne que la puissance de bien juger le vrai d'avec le faux, qui est proprement ce qu'on nomme le bon sens ou la raison, est naturellement égale en tous les hommes." — *Discours de la méthode.*

By his contempt for the past Descartes, it has already been pointed out, was non-classical. By his method he helped to provide French with lucidity and order and those qualities of logical arrangement which have made French literature pre-eminent, and of which, in the seventeenth century, the Cartesian *Logic* of Port-Royal and Boileau's *Art poétique* were great examples:

Avant que d'écrire apprenez à penser.

Perhaps, also, Descartes's mechanistic view of the world and his insensibility to nature may, without creating it, have encouraged the concentration of the School of 1660 on human nature to the exclusion of the great outer one.

Descartes's philosophy does not consider reason to be a mere logical implement, proceeding entirely by deduction. He believed in intuition, each step in his induction or deduction was intuitional rather than syllogistic, and the original postulate of his whole philosophical structure was an intuition. Yet as a vivifying principle to literature interpreting life it was less potent than the thought of Pascal. The system of Descartes was worked out *a priori* by him in the solitude of his *poêle* or of his study. The storm-tossed soul of Pascal did not dally with concepts, but endured physical and mental agony. Pascal was not so much a metaphysician as Descartes and his problems were more those of humanity.

The manifold physical sufferings of Pascal, the turmoil of his mental life, have led many to call him unclassical and to link his name with Rousseau and Chateaubriand. Moreover, Pascal belonged to the defeated Jansenists and not to the lucky Jesuits who swam in the full tide of social success. Yet the rich nature of Pascal contributed, perchance, as much to the content of classicism as the clock-work mechanism of Descartes did to its form; and intellectually the School of 1660 is stamped by the influence of the Jansenists as well as by that of the Jesuits.

Pascal had begun by being a rigid scientist having many affinities with the spirit of Cartesianism, and his mathematical tem-

perament had somewhat the rigidity of the Cartesian rationalistic processes; though, from the beginning, his genius had a greater felicity of intuition. Uppermost, then, in Pascal at that time is what he himself describes impersonally as the *esprit de géométrie*, the ability to use the reason well in handling principles. Descartes remained all his life practically in this condition. The expression of his thought was never completely freed from the technicalities of the solitary and self-centered investigator. Such was not Pascal's experience. *Bene vixit qui bene latuit* was not Pascal's but Descartes's motto. For a time, at least, Pascal came under mundane influences, the worldliness of the duc de Roannez and the chevalier de Méré, the refinement of Mme de Sablé's *salon*, and he passed from mathematics to morals. As a result, Pascal developed the *esprit de finesse* which relies on instinct, insight and feeling. Men have generally one or the other, says Pascal, the *esprit de géométrie* or the *esprit de finesse*, and it is a mark of his supreme genius that he had both.

In time such became Pascal's desire to humiliate reason and self-pride after his absolute conversion to Jansenism, that finally the heart and instinct almost alone are exalted: " le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas." But this condition is rather that of the Pascal of the *Pensées*, not published until after his death. It is this fragmentary work, enriching and giving depth to thought, which has contributed most to the fame of Pascal in modern times, and contains the material which has made some people consider Pascal a pure emotionalist with even some romantic pathological manifestations. In his life-time it was the *Provinciales* which gave him renown as a man of letters. There Pascal showed the felicity of the *esprit de finesse*. Specifically the efforts in morals of Pascal were not successful, since the *morale des honnêtes gens*, with its Jesuit graces, erected as a superstructure on a *libertin* foundation, persisted in spite of his Jansenist virulence. But by the *Provinciales* he deserved the characterization of the first complete prose classicist of the seventeenth century. Here is a work of polished treatment endowed with both spon-

taneousness and logic, clear and smooth, a model of taste even when unfair, an example of " Instinct et raison, marques de deux natures," of which the *Pensées* speak.[1] Pascal shows both in a finished work, the expression of genius and of labor: " This letter is long," he says in his sixteenth *Provinciale*, " because I had no time to make it shorter." Pascal does not offer his mind as an intellectual rag-bag like Montaigne, he is not a professional rhetorician like Balzac. He says in one of the *Pensées*: " Do not say that I have said nothing new: The disposition of the matter is new. In playing tennis both use the same ball, but the one places it better." Of course Pascal was an exception, nor did all appreciate him in his own day. So the century which produced the *Provinciales* and the *Pensées* was pleased with the prettinesses of the Père Bouhours, and even the abbé Cotin had his admirers.[2]

[1] Compare another *pensée*: " Deux excès: exclure la raison, n'admettre que la raison."

[2] On Pascal, in addition to such a standard reference as Sainte-Beuve's *Port-Royal*, see the useful hints found in the writings of V. Giraud (*Pascal, l'homme, l'œuvre, l'influence*), F. Strowski (*Pascal et son temps*), G. Michaut (Preface to his edition of the *Pensées*), and the notes of L. Brunschvicg's editions of the *Pensées*.

PART II

THE STRUCTURE

CHAPTER VII

CHARACTERS AND PERSONS

In the days of fully organized French classicism, under the maturity of Louis XIV, we witness as complete a development of intellectual, political, and social centralization as modern civilization exhibits. In one sense we may compare the life of the French aristocrat with that of the Athenian gentleman, inasmuch as both can devote themselves to a life of cultivated leisure, the one maintained by the toil of slaves, the other by the peasants, those human wild beasts of whom La Bruyère writes in a famous passage.[1] But the modern age was far from presenting that symmetrical combination of "music" and "gymnastic" which lovers of Greek harmony would have us admire. As life grew more and more confined to the court and the town, the headstrong, wilful and semi-feudal *seigneur* of the sixteenth century and of the wars of religion degenerated into a hanger-on at the king's *lever* and *coucher*. The swashbuckler duellist of days as late as Richelieu's or the turbulent rebel of the Fronde no longer existed. The *seigneur* found exercise and diversion in the chase, but he spent more time in *promenade* or *collation*. If an officer engaged in one of Louis's numerous wars, he would make haste, at the coming of the rain and mud of autumn, to leave the troops in winter quarters in Flanders and go back to court to enjoy himself until spring once again summoned him forth. Ladies, too, were no longer the vigorous and rich-blooded amazons of the Fronde manipulating

[1] "L'on voit certains animaux farouches, des mâles et des femelles, répandus par la campagne, noirs, livides et tout brûlés du soleil, attachés à la terre qu'ils fouillent et qu'ils remuent avec une opiniâtreté invincible: ils ont comme une voix articulée, et, quand ils se lèvent sur leurs pieds, ils montrent une face humaine; et en effet ils sont des hommes. Ils se retirent la nuit dans des tanières, où ils vivent de pain noir, d'eau et de racines: ils épargnent aux autres hommes la peine de semer, de labourer et de recueillir pour vivre et méritent ainsi de ne pas manquer de ce pain qu'ils ont semé." — *Des hommes.*

conspiracies, as did Mme de Chevreuse and Mme de Longueville, or armed bodies of men, as did the Grande Mademoiselle, or themselves riding adventurous careers over Europe in male disguise like a niece of Mazarin. Rather were they now pale drawing-room flowers, suffering from *vapeurs* and *migraines*, whether their time was taken up with petty intrigues and jealousies, or with discussions of intellectual matters ranging from a tragedy to Cartesianism.

Above a prostrate nation and amid the crowd of kneeling courtiers was the king, the *roi-soleil*, like the sun at the centre of the revolving planets, encouraged by the increased strength of personal rule and the adulation of eulogists to consider himself the representative of God on earth. The controversies between the Gallican party and the Vatican, and the teachings of Bossuet increased still more the tendency to deify the king, not only as the defender of the faith, but as the spokesman of God:

> Souviens-toi, quelque éclat dont brille ta personne,
> Que de Dieu seulement tu reçus la couronne;
> Que devant tous les temps ses assurés desseins
> Distinguèrent ton sort du reste des humains,
> Et, t'ayant retiré de la masse commune,
> Dans le rang souverain placèrent ta fortune.[1]

Gradually there had become crystallized about the king a system of etiquette, far older than his generation, it is true, but the rigidity of which made the routine of his daily existence have the semblance of a quasi-religious ritual.[2] Even in a layman's way of

[1] Abbé Esprit, *Maximes politiques*, quoted by Nourrisson, *Politique de Bossuet*, p. 40.

[2] "Les grands de la nation s'assemblent tous les jours, à une certaine heure, dans un temple qu'ils nomment église. Il y a au fond de ce temple un autel consacré à ce dieu, où un prêtre célèbre des mystères qu'ils appellent saints, sacrés et redoutables. Les grands forment un vaste cercle au pied de cet autel, et paraissent debout, le dos tourné directement au prêtre et aux saints mystères, et les faces élevées vers leur roi, que l'on voit à genoux sur une tribune, et à qui ils semblent avoir tout l'esprit et tout le cœur appliqués. On ne laisse pas de voir dans cet usage une espèce de subordination, car ce peuple paraît adorer le prince, et le prince adorer Dieu." — La Bruyère, *De la cour*.

looking at it the king was as remote from his fellow-men as the Oriental potentate whom Racine portrays in the Assuérus of *Esther*. Each incident of the robing and disrobing of the king was regulated by precedent. At Versailles gentlemen and ladies passing through the king's bed chamber removed their hats or made deep obeisances before the empty couch as before an altar. The sycophantic duc de la Feuillade erected a statue of Louis XIV in the Place des Victoires and wished to surround it like a shrine with ever-burning lamps. An academy, ancestor of the Académie des Inscriptions, was founded in 1663 for the purpose of devising triumphal inscriptions and mottoes in commemoration of his Majesty and his achievements. The king was not only the incarnation of genius in government, but the supreme master of taste. Says Father Bouhours in the *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène:*

"Il ne ressemble pas seulement à Auguste, dit Ariste, il ressemble aussi à César. Le Roi de France parle sa langue comme le conquérant des Gaules parlait la sienne; c'est-à-dire qu'il la parle très purement, et sans nulle affectation: de sorte que, si notre Prince se donnait la peine d'écrire lui-même son histoire, les Commentaires de Louis vaudraient bien ceux de César." [1]

Louis XIV in time built for himself a shrine worthy of his glory. Disliking Paris and its Louvre, and tiring of Saint-Germain, he erected for himself and his court the magnificent palace of Versailles destined to become the admiration of Europe and the model for petty continental despots who interpreted royal power as Louis XIV had made it. Here were gorgeous ambassadorial staircases, grand galleries frescoed with the victories of the conqueror of Holland and Franche-Comté and innumerable state and private apartments. For days of relaxation there was the palace of Marly, pompous on a smaller scale. In the busy hive of Versailles Louis was apotheosized not only by the evanescent genuflexions of fawning courtiers, but by the more enduring memorials of writers of the classical school.

About the king gravitated the dauphin, the princes of the royal line, like the king's brother, Monsieur, or the head of the princes

[1] Third *entretien*.

of the blood, such as the Prince of Condé. All had their courts and retinues on a smaller scale, as Condé did at Chantilly.

The French aristocracy and upper *bourgeoisie* as a background for literature offered all varieties of human nature. For portraits of general types we turn to the comedies of Molière or the *Characters* of La Bruyère. Just as royal etiquette in the environment of the monarch was as rigid as the laws of the Medes and Persians, so in drawing-room or public walk, in stately *hôtel* or in the Cours-la-Reine, the discipline of social decorum was all-powerful, and certain distinct types were created as a result of early schooling and social training. Of these the essential ones for understanding the social spirit of French classicism were the *honnête homme* and the lady of the *salons*, who evolved the *goût mondain* expressed by the writers of classicism. Obviously the literary and aesthetic ideas of the time have many varied aspects. Some people were devotees of antiquity as they understood it, others were innovators or " Moderns "; there were divergences between the stilted ponderousness of certain conventional traditionalists and the inevitable iconoclastic radicals. The classicism of the seventeenth century was less pervasively humanistic than was the Pléiade. Literature was the property of the man and woman of the world, and the critic, guiding and reflecting taste, aspired to be a *bel esprit* as well.[1]

Towards these results, praiseworthy in the great masters, superficial in the minor writers, the pedagogical methods in vogue contributed not a little. In the training of the Jesuit schools emphasis was placed on a florid literary virtuosity, graceful and well-bred, disdaining " pedantry " and banishing the specialist from among

[1] Cf. such passages as the following: " Nous sommes dans un temps où tout le monde croit avoir le droit de juger de la Poésie, de laquelle Aristote a fait son chef-d'œuvre; où les ruelles des femmes sont les Tribunaux des plus beaux Ouvrages." — Sarasin, Preface of *Discours de la tragédie*. " L'abondance des livres a apporté encore un autre changement dans la République des lettres, qui est qu'autrefois il n'y avait que les savants de profession qui osassent porter leur jugement sur les ouvrages des auteurs, à qui ils donnaient beaucoup de louanges à la charge d'autant, et qu'aujourd'hui tout le monde s'en mêle." — Perrault, *Parallèles*, Dialogue I.

educated men. The Port-Royalists and the Oratorians of the Collège de Juilly were less prone to emphasize rhetoric for itself. The Jansenists, in particular, by the study of Greek enlarged the boundaries of the intellectual world. All these orders realized the ineffectiveness of the traditional scholasticism of the University, butt of gibes by Molière and Boileau. The great Jansenist scholar Arnauld recognized the insufficiency of erudition and logic without persuasiveness when he sought the help of Pascal.

The sway of Mme de Montespan during about thirteen years corresponded with the greatest glamour and glory of the reign of Louis XIV. Intellectually inferior to her successor Mme de Maintenon, she was a more amiable and magnetic woman. In her environment was fostered the combination of social good breeding and aesthetic taste which we connect with the *grand siècle*.

Every age in every land has had its ideal in literature of the gentleman, or perchance its exemplar of virtues in real life, as described by eulogists, a chevalier Bayard, a Sir Philip Sidney. In early modern French literature the influences of ancient moralists and of the Italian social Platonists helped soon in the Renaissance to make manners a matter of discussion. The pseudo-chivalry of the reigns of Francis I and Henry II was artificial in practice, but already in Rabelais, often considered the embodiment of indecency, we find in the Abbey of Thélème a picture of refined life where gentlemen and ladies of natural virtue and gentle training meet in cultured intercourse. In the Abbey of Thélème of the *bourgeois* Rabelais we already see foreshadowings of the *honnête homme* of the seventeenth century. Montaigne, even more, of recent mercantile lineage and striving to take his place among the landed gentry, discusses, we have seen, under the influence of his reading of historians and moralists, the man of breeding, good manners, trained judgment, free from narrow book pedantry, of whom we may say he is " not a grammarian or a logician, but a gentleman."

The prestige of Aristotle made the " Highminded Man " of the fourth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* become a type for those

who liked abstract ethical discussion. His calm reserve and independence were eulogized by Balzac in his studies of the man of breeding,[1] and later Father Bouhours, among others, uses him as a model in his essay on *Bel esprit*. The ideal of the stoic sage was no less potent. The characters represented by the *généreux* of Descartes [2] had a more concrete counterpart in the Cornelian hero, softened by the influence of the sentimental heroic romance. Such a figure as Sévère in *Polyeucte* more than the fanatical hero of that tragedy, or the swashbuckler Rodrigue, or the heartless Horace or the treacherous Cinna, seems an example of the true gentleman conceivedly made possible in the real life of those times. But, as a rule, the seventeenth-century conception, late as well as early, did not call for the sympathy of the modern gentleman. His amenity concealed much that was personal, and the *gloire* of the Cornelian hero was as selfish as that of the *seigneur* of the Fronde or the courtier of Versailles.

The *honnête homme* had to be not only a man of " sense " but a man of breeding, and treatises of deportment were written, such as Faret's *l'Honnête homme ou Art de plaire à la cour* (1630) or the *Lois de la galanterie* (1644), which afforded material to Molière for ridicule in his satires of the marquis.

Pascal helps not a little to understand the *honnête homme* philosophically considered, if it be permissible to apply that term to what becomes often a mere matter of etiquette. Pascal had received many hints from his friends the duc de Roannez and the chevalier de Méré, the latter the authority of his day on the *honnête homme*. But his thoughts grow deeper as they become his own.

" Le moi est haïssable," says Pascal, very differently from Corneille's Horace. Banish self-love and self-conceit. Méré had taught that we should not say *je* but *on*. Theologically Pascal carried this effacement of the self almost to self-annihilation be-

[1] As in the essays on the Roman and on Maecenas.

[2] Desjardins, *la Méthode des classiques français*, p. 45; Lanson, *le Héros cornélien et le Généreux selon Descartes*, in *Hommes et livres*.

fore faith. But even in a worldly sense it meant a delicate abstention from conspicuousness, and a desire to meet others intellectually half way which is, after all, hard to reconcile with the general intolerance characterizing the Jansenists in religion and morals.[1]

Obviously Pascal's position here coincides with the trend of seventeenth-century classicism towards the universal or the general, and the portrayal of types such as we find in Racine or Molière, rather than the individual eccentrics that we see not infrequently in nineteenth-century romanticism. Molière, indeed, more close to the realm of ethics, gives us, as Sainte-Beuve says, the *morale des honnêtes gens*,[2] or the *morale du juste milieu*, represented by the author's mouthpiece in so many of his comedies, the *raisonneur* or man of sense and good counsel, particularly Cléante in *Tartuffe*:

> Les hommes la plupart sont étrangement faits!
> Dans le juste milieu on ne les voit jamais;
> La raison a pour eux des bornes trop petites;
> En chaque caractère ils passent ses limites;
> Et la plus noble chose, ils la gâtent souvent
> Pour la vouloir outrer et pousser trop avant.[3]

We may, perhaps, find here some help in understanding such a puzzling play as *le Misanthrope*, where Alceste, whose indignation at the follies of those with whom he is in contact is justifiable, is made the laughable character of the play,[4] while the pliant Phi-

[1] *Pensées* (Brunschvicg edition, 35): "Il faut qu'on n'en puisse dire, ni: il est mathématicien, ni prédicateur, ni éloquent, mais il est honnête homme; cette qualité universelle me plaît seule. Quand en voyant un homme on se souvient de son livre, c'est mauvais signe; je voudrais qu'on ne s'aperçût d'aucune qualité que par la rencontre et l'occasion d'en user — *Ne quid nimis* — de peur qu'une qualité l'emporte, et ne fasse baptiser; qu'on ne songe point qu'il parle bien, sinon quand il s'agit de bien parler; mais qu'on y songe alors." And Pascal adds (No. 36): "Il faut donc un honnête homme qui puisse s'accommoder à tous mes besoins généralement."

[2] Sainte-Beuve, *Port-Royal*, Bk. III, chs. xv and xvi.

[3] Act I, Scene 5.

[4] The present traditions of the Comédie française are undoubtedly at variance with Molière's own interpretation. He made Alceste comic. Rousseau (*Lettre à d'Alembert*) was partly responsible for the change.

linte, who takes " tout doucement les hommes comme ils sont," who has been compared to the " tricky Jesuit," as opposed to the uncompromising Jansenist, is the spokesman for men of good breeding.

In works like Father Bouhours's *Manière de bien penser dans les ouvrages d'esprit*, eulogized several times by Chesterfield,[1] appears the urbanity supposed to characterize the *honnête homme* as a man of judgment and taste, an urbanity which made him very different from the dogmatic Johnsonian critic usually connected in thought with the name of classicism. Partisan of the golden mean and of amenity in criticism as in manners, this manual of " good taste " is so benevolent that it overlooks much, at least in others, and smiles forgivingly on the critic who is Ovidian rather than Aristotelian. La Bruyère is at one with Bouhours when he writes in his chapter *Des ouvrages de l'esprit*: " Il faut chercher seulement à parler juste, sans vouloir amener les autres à notre goût et à nos sentiments; c'est une trop grande entreprise."

If we look for concrete embodiments we find plenty of examples among royalty and the aristocracy, at least as flatterers saw them. The eulogists read into the characters of the king and of Condé every perfection. For sovereigns, says La Bruyère, are even unconsciously arbiters of taste,[2] and princes unite with knowledge the Atticism of the Greeks and the Urbanity of the Romans.[3] Obviously Louis XIV was the embodiment of every excellence according to all who described him, even the cynical Saint-Simon. With an air of authority, a majestic bearing, equanimity of temperament, a sincere and open heart, every grace and charm of manner, firmness and solidity of judgment, a spirit of equity, a ready memory and many other virtues,[4] who was better fitted to

[1] Thus in 1750: " I do not know any book that contributes more to form a good taste."

[2] " Les princes, sans autre science ni autre règle, ont un goût de comparaison: ils sont nés et élevés au milieu et comme dans le centre des meilleures choses, à quoi ils rapportent ce qu'ils lisent, ce qu'ils voient et ce qu'ils entendent." — *Des Grands.*

[3] *Des jugements.* [4] La Bruyère, *Du Souverain.*

guide his loyal subjects in peace as well as in war? When the two interlocutors in Bouhours's *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène* discussed the French language in their second conversation, they waxed so enthusiastic over the king's perfect mastery of French that their talk lasted until the fall of night drove them within doors.

Lower in the scale, among human beings instead of demi-gods, manners and social graces were much emphasized. Never were there worse reprobates than the Prince of Conti or Mme de Sévigné's cousin, Bussy-Rabutin, examples of the "grand seigneur méchant homme" before whom Sganarelle in Molière's *Don Juan* stood aghast. But Bussy and Mme de Sévigné's other friend Corbinelli thought themselves authorities on the *honnête homme*.[1] And when Bussy writes to Mme de Sévigné in 1650 about her husband that "Il est tellement persuadé qu'on ne peut être honnête homme, sans être amoureux,"[2] the *honnête homme* is in danger of merging with the *petit marquis* or fop.[3]

English-speaking people are more likely to understand the *honnête homme* of the drawing-rooms when they recall Lord Chesterfield's comments on the Gentleman, his dignity of manners, his ease and grace of carriage and behavior, his observation of *les bienséances*, and his familiarity with *les manières nobles* which can be acquired only in the "best companies." The true gentleman should avoid anything so undignified as a laugh. Just

[1] Corbinelli to Bussy in Mme de Sévigné's *Lettres* (vol. v, p. 525): "Je ne puis plus souffrir qu'on dise qu'un tel est *honnête homme*, et que l'on conçoive sous ce terme une chose, et l'autre une autre. Je veux qu'on ait une idée particulière de ce qu'on nomme le galant homme, l'homme de bien, l'homme d'honneur, l'honnête homme; qu'on sache ce que c'est que le goût, le bon sens, le jugement, le discernement, l'esprit, la raison, la délicatesse, l'honnêteté, la politesse, la civilité." Bussy replied (p. 529): "*L'honnête homme* est un homme poli et qui sait vivre; *l'homme de bien* regarde la religion; le *galant homme* est une qualité particulière qui regarde la franchise et la générosité; *l'homme d'honneur* est un homme de parole, et cela regarde la probité; le *brave homme*, dont vous ne me parlez pas, ne regarde que le courage."

[2] Vol. i, pp. 367–368.

[3] La Rochefoucauld (Maxim cccliii) says: "Un honnête homme peut être amoureux comme un fou, mais non pas comme un sot."

as La Rochefoucauld tells us in his own *Portrait* that he had scarcely been seen to laugh three or four times in as many years, so to Lord Chesterfield laughter was a " shocking distortion of the face." [1]

It is perhaps, after all, in such an abstract social moralist as La Rochefoucauld that we get one of the best definitions of the seventeenth-century *honnête homme* (even though he did not live up to it), because he does not put the whole emphasis on manners. The true *honnête homme*, says La Rochefoucauld, *est celui qui ne se pique de rien*.[2] His good taste, moderation and common sense show themselves in evenly developed mental and social qualities, which save him from being a narrow pedant or a self-centred egoist. He was a well rounded man, fitted to play his part in society, which of course reached its apogee in the court of Louis the Great. Molière, in the *Femmes savantes*, contrasts pedantry and the wit of the court. La Bruyère, though a somewhat less cynical critic than La Rochefoucauld, touches more on the moral side when he emphasizes the uprightness of the true *honnête homme*,[3] and in his differentiation between the *honnête homme*, the

[1] " — I heartily wish that you may often be seen to smile, but never heard to laugh while you live. . . . In my mind there is nothing so illiberal, and so illbred as audible laughter. . . . Not to mention the disagreeable noise that it makes and the shocking distortion of the face that it occasions. . . . — I am sure that since I have had the full use of my reason, nobody has ever heard me laugh." — March 9, 1748. " Loud laughter is the mirth of the mob, who are only pleased with silly things; for true wit or good sense never excited a laugh since the creation of the world. A man of parts and fashion is therefore only seen to smile, but never heard to laugh." — Oct. 19, 1748.

[2] The chevalier de Méré, in his *Discours des agrémens*, says more fully what La Rochefoucauld says so concisely: " Il serait à souhaiter pour être toujours agréable, d'exceller en tout ce qui sied bien aux honnêtes gens, sans néanmoins se piquer de rien: je veux dire sans rien faire qui ne s'offre de lui-même, et sans rien dire qui puisse témoigner qu'on se veut faire valoir. Car les choses qui viennent d'elles-mêmes quand on s'en acquitte bien, ont toute une autre grâce que celles qui semblent recherchées."

[3] " Un honnête homme qui dit oui ou non, mérite d'être cru: son caractère jure pour lui, donne créance à ses paroles, et lui attire toute sorte de confiance." — *De la société et de la conversation.*

habile homme and the *homme de bien*,[1] he makes the idea of the *honnête homme* approach our conception of the honest man.[2]

The *honnête homme* finds his social complement in the lady of the *salons*. Like the *honnête homme*, the woman of true dignity and charm *ne se pique de rien*, as Molière, exponent of the *morale des honnêtes gens*, proclaims in his tirades against the bluestocking and her

— passion choquante
De se rendre savante afin d'être savante.

The ladies of the seventeenth century cannot in reality be brought under one category. But as the years went on they, like the men, reached greater uniformity. The intriguing heroines of the Fronde calmed down. The *précieuse*, mothered in the *salon* of Mme de Rambouillet, but truly fostered in that of Mlle de Scudéry, continued to evoke the unfair diatribes of Molière when she appeared as a prude or a *femme savante*. But in the companionship of Mme de Sablé, Mme de Sévigné, Mme de la Fayette and of countless other noble ladies of grace and charm, as well as among women of less reputation, such as Ninon de Lenclos or Mme de Villedieu, one finds examples in reply to Bouhours's query — answered by him patronizingly in the affirmative — whether a woman can be a *bel esprit*; a quality which, by the way, he unhesitatingly denies to a German.

Amid this world of men of breeding and women of intellect or fashion there passed an eager and restless procession of men of letters: poets and versifiers, authors of tragedies or sonnets and epigrams; critics primed with the jargon of their trade and eloquent about "la protase, l'épitase et la péripétie,"[3] or *beaux esprits* prolific in *pointes*. To all, the patronage of the king or of a prince or princess was the source of comfort and happiness. Such a one, unlike the beggarly hack writer Colletet,

N'attend pas pour dîner le succès d'un sonnet.[4]

[1] *Des jugements.*

[2] D. Zevaco has an article, *l'Honnête homme au xvii^e siècle* in the *Revue de philologie française*, vol. xxv.

[3] *Critique de l'Ecole des femmes.* [4] *Art poétique.*

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In the environment we have described we need not be surprised to find the intellectual *average* no higher than that of one or two other periods of French history. The " universality " of fashionable writers was sometimes parochial in its horizon bounded by *la cour* and *la ville*; they were superficially smart in wit, and desire for the approval of the powerful was the essence of their ethos. Fortunately we judge French classicism, not by Pradon or Quinault, but by Racine. Racine, Molière, Boileau and Bossuet are the real standards.

Racine shows in his tragedies realistic psychological analysis of human character. Under the guidance of ancient writers and the legends of mythology he devised plots illustrating permanent laws of human life. The plays were written under the dominance of a single school of religious thought, Jansenism, but the determinism of Saint-Cyran and Arnauld was no newer than the fate or necessity of the ancients. On the other hand the jealous Hermione, the scheming Agrippine, the criminal Phèdre were intensely modern to seventeenth-century spectators, and the poisoning of Britannicus came home to an age which saw poison in every mysterious death, like that of Henriette d'Angleterre, and shuddered at the crimes of the marquise de Brinvilliers and the femme Voisin. The plays of Racine were *tranches de vie* considered from the point of view of the seventeenth century, and yet they presented problems such as the great writers of antiquity, or at any rate the most realistic of them, Euripides, had shown. In this portrayal of unchangeable laws of human nature Racine was more universal than Corneille, whose supermen and superwomen belonged to one age rather than to all times. Corneille's *Horace* interprets a period of heroism like that of the recent Great War, his Polyeucte may inspire a religious enthusiast, or his Emilie a Charlotte Corday, but his characters are exceptions and of a grandeur not always admirable. Generations ago La Bruyère wrote a true parallel which later writers have merely paraphrased:

Corneille nous assujettit à ses caractères et à ses idées, Racine se conforme aux nôtres; celui-là peint les hommes comme ils devraient être, celui-ci les

peint tels qu'ils sont. Il y a plus dans le premier de ce que l'on admire, et de ce que l'on doit même imiter; il y a plus dans le second de ce que l'on reconnaît dans les autres, ou de ce que l'on éprouve dans soi-même. L'un élève, étonne, maîtrise, instruit; l'autre plaît, remue, touche, pénètre.

As to style the poetry of Racine reaches a perfection of smoothness and melody, which Malherbe was groping for when he made his brutal comments on Desportes. But Malherbe writing a poem needed weeks of slow elaboration, whereas when Racine had dovetailed the parts of his plot his play was virtually done. This dovetailing was precisely the chief task in Racine's construction of plays. Acts and scenes follow each other in an order which is logical and plausible, converging to an effective climax and a natural *dénoûment.*

Molière stands in contrast to the other writers of comedy of his century. Where they for the most part relied on buffoonery or puppet characters entangled in comic incidents, Molière added to the farce the study of characters and of manners. Tartuffe and Alceste are analyses of human nature, in spite of some comic exaggeration. Comedies of manners, like the *Femmes savantes* and much of the *Misanthrope* itself, are scenes of contemporary seventeenth-century life, but the persons who move in them are permanent beings. Molière, the *contemplateur*, needs no justification for the position universally awarded him of the great observer of human nature.

In Boileau French classicism finds its theorist. Clear, orderly and logical, he embodies the aspect of reason called " common sense " in literary judgment. Somewhat prosaic, intolerant of fantasy and flights of the imagination as well as of buffoonery and grotesque, less familiar with the human heart than Racine, less experienced in men beyond the walls of Paris than Molière, he still stands for sanity. His horizon was not vast enough to include the literature of the Middle Ages or the efforts of the Pléiade to achieve a task like his own; he did not fully appreciate a master of his own century like Corneille, or even his own friends Molière and La Fontaine; his classification of poetical forms has been

thrown into the discard, but his individual judgments have, in the majority of cases, been ratified by posterity. Moreover, though Boileau like his fellows gravitated in the king's orbit and was one of the adulators of Louis the Great, though he created hardly a single critical dictum, but only formulated ideas which were in the air, still the sturdy verdicts of the *bourgeois* of Paris have their independence and demand at least respectful consideration. He is one of those who prove, otherwise than by success on the battlefield, that the French have solidity and sanity.

It is in Bossuet that we find the incarnation of seventeenth-century classicism, yet in a way which the seventeenth century did not itself fully realize, since it appreciated more other men, like Bourdaloue, who were better fitted *proprie communia dicere*.[1] Orator and writer in prose, he nevertheless has a certain lyrical quality which adds poetry to his prose. His sermons are smooth and natural, but in his funeral orations he rises to stately majesty as expounder of the mysteries of the Catholic faith and preacher to royalty. Bossuet is the great intellectualist of his Church, who appeals to the heart through the reason.

Especially as spokesman of royalty through his leadership of the Gallican church, and through his own conception of the position of the king in the hierarchy of the world, does he fittingly throw a lustre on his times. He places the sovereign on a high pinnacle, making him the representative of God on earth. The king owes account to God alone for his conscience and his actions. Bossuet is the admirer of tradition and of authority. In faith as in politics his conception is of a static order. The monarch was indeed to him that potentate Louis XIV felt himself to be when, in his gorgeous shrine of Versailles, he exacted from fawning courtiers genuflexions as precise and as graded as those of a religious rite. In Bossuet decked out in the stately robes of his priestly office, preaching the last eulogy of queen or prince before the highest born in France, amid the ceremonial of the church and in an im-

[1] Cf. Brunetière, *Bossuet*, p. 62.

posing sanctuary, expounding the universal laws of a humanity destined to die and the inscrutable decrees of Providence—in Bossuet thus pictured we understand better than ever the monarch and his *régime*.

It is obvious, from what has gone before, that French seventeenth-century classicism would not suit the present in all its details any more than it itself coincided with the classicism of antiquity. Each age has different needs. The great masters, briefly characterized above, had enduring qualities which made them override the boundaries of their own age. They participate in the heritage of universal thought. But many writers of the seventeenth century belong only to their own day and are quite obsolete now, especially those who were only the result of the environment, and suggest merely their rigidly graded aristocratic age, subservient to a social ideal depending on one man. It was a nationalism too often imposed from the throne, rather than by the dry light of pure reason.

In the present ignorance of Latin and Greek, with the cult of applied science, any mention of modern classicism may seem a contradiction in terms. Moreover, successive generations of emotionalists, following Rousseau and passing though romanticism, seem to have cut us off from even the seventeenth-century classicism so often abused as a mass of pettifogging rules. Indeed, romanticism did perform a useful task in shaking off a degenerate formalism and in making thought more cosmopolitan, thereby wonderfully enriching the content of literature.

But romanticism ran the risk of becoming as reprehensible as the formalism against which it rebelled. The absence of standards in romanticism begets exaggerated impressionism, egotism and triviality which culminated in the late nineteenth century. France suffered through the very defect of its qualities, and the desire to carry to logical conclusions the individualism of its literature brought about the contortions of the *décadents* and of their successors, the "synthesists," the "sumptuarists," the "integralists," the "impulsionists," the "unanimists," the "futurists,"

the " intensists " and others.[1] The human soul could emit all kinds of aesthetic effluvia and all had poetic value.

Many people in contemporary France have tried to react against this chaos. It was desired to find a permanent standard in a world of apparent flux. Some young men thought they saw it in the heritage of national tradition. Thinking they could trace a close bond between literary chaos and the confusion of modern democracy, and remembering the orderly government of the old *régime*, they evolved under Charles Maurras a political " classicism " or " traditionalism." [2] The restoration of monarchy, even under such a mediocrity as the Duke of Orleans, would infallibly bring back sanity in intellectual matters and in the body politic, and restore France to that world leadership which she had in the seventeenth century and which modern ochlocracy made impossible. For similar traditionalist motives the royalists preached a Catholic revival because of the union of the Church and the old *régime*. This Catholic revival proceeded apace in France after the great war began, but obviously for different motives, and was due to the longing for spiritual consolation in the midst of grief and trial.

But true classicism does not need to be linked with a political or a religious creed. The pagan stoic could be a classicist as well as the Christian Pascal. Classicism transcends in permanence passing forms but it can use transitory material and content. Thus it adapts itself to its time and can ever be modern, so that Racine's plays were legends of antiquity and yet true to the seventeenth century.

Classicism is chiefly intellectual and demands obedience to a standard. Reason gives order to the world which it envisages and Imagination recreates it in terms of literature or art. We no longer need to speak of " reducing the Muse to the laws of duty,"

[1] Cf., for these and many other terms, Florian-Parmentier, *Histoire de la littérature française de 1885 à nos jours*.

[2] Cf. different phases of anti-Romanticism in the writings of Lasserre, Seillière, Maigron (*le Romantisme et les mœurs*), Julien Benda (*Belphégor*), and in English of Irving Babbitt.

nor to divide poetical *genres* into a hierarchy of separate types: time and experience have shown how inadequate are such rigid moulds to interpret the cosmopolitan universality which replaces the nationalism of Louis XIV. But we need more than ever to value qualities of logic, order, clearness, precision, and those of sanity and moderation. The skilled judgment of the intellect is best trained by contact with consecrated masterpieces, especially those of antiquity which, deny it though one may, remain the foundation of our aesthetic appreciation. But to these we may now add great kindred writers of modern times, Shakespeare, Racine or Molière. The judgment should not be too rigidly intellectual and need not banish all feeling, or its verdicts will be one-sided and incapable of understanding the richness of the human soul, which is emotional as well as intellectual and cannot be grasped by what is less complete than itself. The judgment should be guided by taste, an insight intuitive in some, in others to a certain degree acquired, and usually capable of improvement by training. Consciously or not we find ourselves again and again brought back to the standards and models of antiquity; for in the literature of Greece, at all events, we see the record of experiments like ours, carried out by geniuses whom posterity has, at any rate, not excelled. These experiments, having been made in a younger and less complicated world, stand forth the more clearly as models and ideals for guidance and imitation. Especially are we thereby saved from being led astray by the eccentricities of aberrationists. A sane and clear-sighted intellect, linked with an inborn or trained taste, seeking the inspiration of great masters of past literature who have themselves tried to interpret the universal laws of nature — this we may consider to be the foundation of true classicism.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRINCIPLES

The varied opinions expressed by seventeenth-century critics make a consistent and systematic exposition of their views difficult.[1] It is not very easy, for instance, to differentiate in the many discussions between the poet and the critic. Boileau, in his *Art poétique*, thinks chiefly of the poet; Pope, in his *Essay on Criticism*, of the critic. But the poet, according to Boileau, must be his own severest critic. So the terms " reason," " understanding " and the like, may be studied as often applicable to both.

It will be as well to make, at the outset of this chapter, what may be considered a normal and moderate statement of the fundamentals of seventeenth-century classicism as to poetry and criticism, before passing to the individual writers.

The poet should have genius or inspiration, working in harmony with the rules, with a rich imagination or invention, restrained by decorum, and endeavoring to portray " nature " in accordance with the principle of verisimilitude.

The critic should have understanding and insight, with " wit " and a power of judgment based on reason or good sense, and also on approved authority. This results in the setting-up of standards of taste, in accordance with which works may be approved or condemned.

[1] Vial et Denise, *Idées et doctrines littéraires du xvii^e siècle* is a useful collection of critical passages, but the extracts are usually short and are separated from the context. R. P. Cowl's *The Theory of Poetry in English* is a somewhat similar volume. The chief English essays are collected in Spingarn's *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*. See also Ker's edition of the essays of Dryden. Delaporte's *Commentaire sur l'Art poétique de Boileau* contains excellent material. One may mention also Saintsbury's *Loci Critici*, and particularly Gayley and Scott's *Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism*. The fullest recent *History of Criticism* is again by Saintsbury. Saint-Réal's seventeenth-century *De la critique* has nothing to the point.

The classical movement in France in the seventeenth century brought about conventional ideals of taste and style. The *grand goût* found its expression in the *style noble* with the beginnings of which Balzac had much to do, and which reached its culmination in certain of the writings of Bossuet. It was rhetorical or oratorical, based ultimately on Latin models, and harmonized well with the self-conscious aristocratic dignity upon which the seventeenth century prided itself. But there was, of course, also a less ambitious and less soaring style, of which we get an example in the smooth and fluid amenity of Father Bouhours. Both these styles ran the risk of deterioration when made the vehicle for false figures of speech, *pointes* and verbal agilities.[1] But each was deemed praiseworthy in its way and each was supposed to maintain certain standards. Says Boileau of poetry: "Le style le moins noble a pourtant sa noblesse." One of the chief features of the *style noble* was the proscription of terms considered *bas*, not necessarily vulgar, but merely commonplace. In preciosity this had woeful consequences, but even Boileau, however hostile to the exaggerations of preciosity, was punctilious about such matters. His mock-heroic poem, the *Lutrin*, was an example of the *style noble* applied to humor. In later generations the cult of the *style noble* so impeded vivacity that it led to the stilted periphrases of Delille. One then understands the anger of the romanticists and their cult of the *mot propre*.[2]

[1] Scudéry, in the preface of *Alaric*, says that there are three styles: the *sublime*, which degenerates into the *bouffi* and *enflé*; the *médiocre*, which degenerates into the *faible* and *stérile*; the *bas*, which degenerates into the *grossier* and *trop populaire*.

[2] Concerning the Grand Style in art Reynolds says in his eighth *Discourse:* "De Piles recommends to us portrait painters, to add grace and dignity to the characters of those whose portraits we draw: so far he is undoubtedly right; but, unluckily, he descends to particulars and gives his own idea of grace and dignity. 'If,' says he, 'you draw persons of high character and dignity, they ought to be drawn in such an attitude, that the portraits must seem to speak to us of themselves, and, as it were, to say to us: "Stop, take notice of me, I am that invincible King, surrounded by Majesty": "I am that valiant commander who struck terror everywhere": "I am that great minister who knew all the springs of politics": "I am that magistrate of consummate wisdom and probity."' He goes on in this manner with all the characters he can think on."

The standard of judgment was one of the chief questions of the age. Was the principle Reason, or Authority, or Inspiration, either fantastic or vaticinal? Or was it, finally, the result of a training of the faculties taking the specific name of Good Taste or Taste, the "power of distinguishing right from wrong," that act of the mind by which we like or dislike.[1] Or, better still, did not these different elements of reason, authority, and taste combine?

The easiest solution referred everything to authority, especially of the ancients. The glamour of antiquity, the long sway of classical authors in the schools, had obviously invested them with an infallibility readily understood. This tendency had prevailed during the sixteenth-century classicism which, in spite of Ronsard's glorification of poetical frenzy and the inspiration of the Muses, resolved itself in so many cases into a slavish imitation of individual models, whether among the ancients or the modern Italians. We have seen that with "Aristotle," as his authority diminished in philosophy, it increased in poetry, especially the drama, until rigid rules held tragedy in their iron grasp. A concrete standard was set up, and works were judged by the degree in which they were supposed to approach the model through the application of the rules. This was classicism in its simplest form, and in the seventeenth century it was really often at the bottom of other apparently more subtle views.[2]

Perhaps, however, the appeal to Reason was more frequent, and the rules of the ancients were justified because they conformed with reason. For instance, the abbé d'Aubignac, in his chapter, *Des règles des anciens*,[3] answers five objections made to the rules. These were:

[1] Sir J. Reynolds, Seventh *Discourse*.

[2] Thus the abbé d'Aubignac (*Pratique du théâtre*, Bk. I, ch. 5), gives a list of authorities recommended to the aspiring dramatist. He must read the *Poetics* of Aristotle and Horace; all their commentators and the later critics, Castelvetro, Vida, Heinsius, Vossius, La Mesnardière, and above all Scaliger; likewise Plutarch, Athenaeus and Lilius Giraldus. Then, after the theorists, he should read all the poems of Greek and Latin authors, not omitting their scholiasts and glossators.

[3] *Pratique du théâtre*, Bk. I, ch. 4.

1. That no law should be by example, and that reason should always prevail over authority.
2. That the ancients often violated their own rules.
3. That some ancient works brought out on the modern stage have been poorly received.
4. That sundry modern works in violation of the rules have been most successful.
5. That, if these rules were strictly followed, the stage would sacrifice much in losing the representation of true narratives which are usually not confined by the unities.

To these objections the abbé d'Aubignac replied that the rules of the theatre are based, not on authority but on reason, not on example but on *le jugement naturel*. The practical value of the rules lies in being the result of the observation of the ancients. Inasmuch as the rules are based on uniform reason, ancients, as well as moderns, may have failed in applying them. If ancient works have sometimes failed in modern form, this has often been due to subsidiary causes, such as a bad translation or an unjustifiable remodelling. When modern works have found favor it has been only in so far as certain parts were in conformity with reason and the rules. Finally, d'Aubignac considers the fifth objection preposterous, because the rules do not prevent the representation of noteworthy incidents, but merely readjust and rearrange them.

Thus it appears that d'Aubignac, so often called a slavish, cut-and-dried disciple of antiquity, really places something else above the ancients, Reason, of which, however, they are usually the best interpreters. But he is ready to rebuke them if they fall short of the demands of Reason. Were it not that the Reason of d'Aubignac is static, we might see in him hints of the attitude of the "Moderns" as exemplified in the great dispute with the "Ancients." But d'Aubignac's Reason is intolerant, and we are far from the view of Perrault's first dialogue that only God and the King may speak dogmatically, and everywhere else Reason rules.

Sensible moderates, like Boileau, held a mitigated form of the same opinion. Boileau's *Art poétique* is full of allusions to reason:

> Aimez donc la raison; que toujours vos écrits
> Empruntent d'elle seule et leur lustre et leur prix.

But Boileau uses another expression which is to him practically equivalent to *raison*, and which shows him to be far from the abstract formalist he has so often been called. This was *le bon sens*. Reason, then, to the critic like Boileau, instead of being a formidable philosophical expression, merely meant the dictates of common sense. It was the neglect of *bon sens* which caused vulgar burlesque or offensive bombast.[1] Rules, says Rapin, make everything *juste*, *proportionné*, *naturel*, being based on good sense and reason more than on authority and example.

Another proof, if needed, that true classicism in the seventeenth century was not confined to formal rules, is to be found in Boileau's views on Inspiration. The attention which he perforce devotes in his *Art poétique* to the description of literary forms and the enumeration of their distinctive features obscures the fact that he considers Inspiration no less important than rules; even more so. The obviousness of this truth dispenses him from dealing with it in detail. To Boileau also the poet is born and not made, as he tells us in the opening lines of his treatise:

> C'est en vain qu'au Parnasse un téméraire auteur
> Pense de l'art des vers atteindre la hauteur:
> S'il ne sent point du ciel l'influence secrète,
> Si son astre en naissant ne l'a formé poète,
> Dans son génie étroit il est toujours captif;
> Pour lui Phébus est sourd et Pégase est rétif.

Boileau, therefore, requires genius as a *sine qua non*, though he does not give it the mystical power attributed to it by the six-

[1] Cf. Bussy, in Mme de Sévigné's *Lettres* (ed. *Grands Ecrivains*, vol. v, p. 513): "Nous croyons que le bon sens, la raison et le bon esprit, c'est la même chose; nous croyons que *génie* est général, et *talent* particulier; nous croyons que la bizarrerie est continuelle et le caprice par intervalles; nous croyons que c'est une bonne qualité que d'être naïf, ou du moins indifférent, et que c'est un défaut d'être ingénu; nous croyons qu'il faut plus d'esprit pour être poli que pour être honnête; que l'honnêteté a plus de fonds et plus d'étendue que la civilité, qui n'en a que l'apparence."

teenth-century classicism of Ronsard. In practice he does, indeed, conscious of the laborious efforts of his own criticism, emphasize toil, patience, and the application of the rules more than inspiration. Boileau would no more than Malherbe cry like the romanticist: " Ah! frappe-toi le cœur, c'est là qu'est le génie! " This would open the way to the errors of a Théophile who thought that " Jamais un bon esprit ne fait rien qu'aisément." [1] It would destroy all the benefits of long excogitation and the good results of polishing and repolishing, of putting one's work back on the stocks a score of times. Even when Boileau's muse is vaticinal and the " chaste nymphs of the Permessus " inspire him with a " docte et sainte ivresse," as in the *Ode sur la prise de Namur*, he does not forget that " un beau désordre est un effet de l'art." Boileau does not believe in violating the rules. He does, however, think that genius may sometimes transcend them:

> Quelquefois dans sa course un esprit vigoureux,
> Trop resserré par l'art, sort des règles prescrites,
> Et de l'art même apprend à franchir les limites.[2]

Says Rapin: You cannot be perfect in Poesy without both genius and art. With Quintilian we must say that genius is preferable to art. But it is not enough to have genius: one must feel and know of what it is capable. The greater the genius, the more wisdom and prudence are needed to moderate its fire and regulate its

[1] Contrast Pope's *Essay on Criticism*:

> True ease in writing comes from Art, not Chance,
> As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance.

[2] Cf. Pope, *Essay on Criticism*:

> A generous muse may sometimes take her flight
> When too much fettered with the rules of art,
> May sometimes from her stricter bounds and limits part.

Jouin, *Conférences de l'Académie de peinture*, p. 90: " Il [Philippe de Champagne] soutenait ensuite que l'excellence de la peinture dépendait moins des règles de l'art que d'un beau génie," etc. On Coypel see Jouin, p. 283. Sir J. Reynolds (first *Discourse*): " Every opportunity, therefore, should be taken to discountenance that false and vulgar opinion, that rules are the fetters of genius; they are fetters only to men of no genius; so that armour, which upon the strong is an ornament and a defence, upon the weak and misshapen becomes a load, and cripples the body which it was made to protect."

natural vivacity: " Car la raison doit être encore plus forte que le génie, pour savoir jusques où l'emportement doit aller." The poet who wishes to do things rightly should heed above all Aristotle, of whom Horace is the great interpreter.

The laws and rules of reason resulted in setting up standards of Taste. *Le goût* was to some a rigid tribunal applying a law, and so it was very likely to be interpreted in the seventeenth century. Taste is good or bad, says La Bruyère.[1] To the less dogmatic it was a delicacy of perception, a refined appreciation. To such an idea men like Saint-Evremond inclined.[2]

Wit, *esprit, bel esprit*, tended to be emphasized by those who thought more of intellectual processes than of genius and inspiration. The amiable and sensible Bouhours, in his essay on *le Bel esprit*, treats in a more general way as respects both prose and verse, what Boileau considers more particularly with regard to poetry. Here, again, we come upon definitions which tally with

[1] " Il y a dans l'art un point de perfection, comme de bonté ou de maturité dans la nature; celui qui le sent et qui l'aime a le goût parfait: celui qui le sent et qui aime en deçà ou au delà a le goût défectueux. Il y a donc un bon et un mauvais goût, et l'on dispute des goûts avec fondement." — La Bruyère, *Des ouvrages de l'esprit.* See also Sir Joshua Reynolds's seventh *Discourse, passim*: " We will take it for granted, that reason is something invariable, and fixed in the nature of things; and without endeavoring to go back to an account of first principles, which for ever will elude our search, we will conclude, that whatever goes under the name of taste, which we can fairly bring under the dominion of reason, must be considered as equally free from change. If, therefore, in the course of this enquiry, we can show that there are rules for the conduct of the artist which are fixed and invariable, it follows, of course, that the art of the connoisseur, or, in other words, taste, has likewise invariable principles. . . . It has been the main scope and principal end of this discourse to demonstrate the reality of a standard in taste, as well as in corporeal beauty; that a false or depraved taste is a thing as well known, as easily discovered, as anything that is deformed, misshapen, or wrong, in our form or outward make; and that this knowledge is derived from the uniformity of sentiments among mankind, from whence proceeds the knowledge of what are the general habits of nature; the result of which is our idea of perfect beauty." The eighteenth-century critic Batteux, in his *les Beaux Arts réduits à un même principe*, unites all arts by the common principle of *goût*, the entire object of whose laws is *l'imitation de la belle nature.*

[2] To Bussy-Rabutin *goût* = *discernement* and *délicatesse*. Cf. Mme de Sévigné's *Lettres* (ed. *Grands Ecrivains*, vol. v, p. 529).

Boileau's *bon sens*, as an expression of *la raison*. True *bel esprit*, says Bouhours, must not be confounded with superficial vivacity. It is inseparable from *bon sens* and may be defined as *le bon sens qui brille*. It proceeds from a straightforward and luminous intellect, a clear and agreeable imagination, and is full of gaiety, life and fire, "such as it appears in the essays of Montaigne." When one possesses this sort of *esprit* things are well conceived and well expressed. Its characteristics are not only, among other things, solidity, penetration, delicacy, richness, accuracy and universality, but clearness and modesty. A mere scholar is not a *bel esprit*, and poetasters are only *jolis esprits*. A true *bel esprit* has the characteristics of the ideal *honnête homme*, his intellect has the qualities which imply reason and *bon sens* and which find expression in French classicism.[1] Thus Bouhours and his compeers belong to what some critics have specifically called the "School of Taste."

Bel esprit is understood above in a much higher sense than it appears in the superficial drawing-room Wit or Bel esprit of the *salons*, with his affected manners and his conceit, like Trissotin:

> Vous voulez de l'esprit, de la délicatesse,
> De l'agrément, de la justesse;
> Vous voulez des termes choisis,
> Un style naturel, noble, simple, concis;
> Des traits ingénieux que chacun puisse entendre;
> En un mot, un esprit exquis.
> Dites-moi, Monsieur le Marquis,
> Où vous en avez à vendre.
> Le bel esprit est un titre fort beau,
> Quand on aime à courir de ruelle en ruelle;
> Mais ce n'est point le fait d'une sage cervelle
> De chercher à briller sur un terme nouveau,
> Le bon sens de l'esprit est le guide fidèle;
> Lui seul peut le conduire, et sait le ménager.
> Un bel esprit, si j'en sais bien juger,
> Est un diseur de bagatelle.[2]

[1] Cf. Doncieux, *Bouhours*, p. 224 ff.

[2] Saint-Evremond, *Oeuvres*, ed. 1753, vol. ix, p. 230 (*Mélange curieux des meilleures pièces qui lui sont attribuées*).

From what precedes we see that to the seventeenth-century theorists there was a relation somewhat like a sliding-scale between the rules and that gift of heaven called genius. To use the words of Rymer's translation of Rapin, a poet must have "a genius extraordinary, great natural gifts; a wit just, fruitful, piercing, solid, universal; an understanding clear and distinct; an imagination neat and pleasant; an elevation of soul that depends not on art or study, and which is purely the gift of Heaven, and must be sustained by a lively sense and vivacity; a great judgment to consider wisely of things, and a vivacity to express them with that grace and abundance which gives them beauty." Judgment without Wit is cold and heavy; Wit without Judgment is extravagant and blind.

Genius itself could, therefore, have degrees and qualities according to different critics. In the seventeenth century it probably did not very often mean, as with Saint-Evremond, a sort of frenzy.[1] It was more apt to go hand in hand with learning and taste, judgment and wit.[2] Boileau is less concerned with imagination than are some of his fellow-critics, and in practice is a somewhat consistent rationalist.[3] It is fairly safe to say that Sir William Temple was not very remote from the average contemporary

[1] "La poésie demande un génie particulier qui ne s'accorde pas trop avec le bon sens. Tantôt, c'est le langage des dieux, tantôt c'est le langage des fous, rarement celui d'un honnête homme." — *A. M. le maréchal de Créqui.*

[2] Dryden says: "A happy genius is the gift of nature. It depends on the influence of the stars, say the astrologers; or the organs of the body, say the naturalists; it is the particular gift of Heaven, say the divines, both Christians and heathens. How to improve it, many books can teach us; how to obtain it, none; that nothing can be done without it, all agree:

Tu nihil invita dices faciesve Minerva."

Parallel of Poetry and Painting.

[3] To Dryden (Preface to *Annus Mirabilis*), wit in the poet is the faculty of imagination in the writer, of which the first happiness "is properly invention, or finding of the thought; the second is fancy, or the variation, deriving, or moulding, of that thought, as the judgment represents it proper to the subject; the third is elocution, or the art of clothing and adorning that thought, so found and varied, in apt, significant and sounding words: the quickness of the imagination is seen in the invention, the fertility in the fancy, and the accuracy in the expression."

French opinion when he says in his essay *Of Poetry* that Genius begets Invention, but invention must be perfected by time and application, that it express itself with sound judgment and good sense, wit and taste.

The poet, with his subjective genius and those traits shared in common with the critic, views objectively Nature, and practises Imitation of it by means of imagination and invention. If he yields too much to the freedom of unregulated " invention " he is likely to become unreal and fantastical in his imaginings. Through the imitation of nature, guided by the rules, he cannot fail to achieve the highest results. But what is nature ? The seventeenth century, at least in the second half when men like Théophile and Saint-Amant had passed away, was far from conceiving nature as Rousseau and the eighteenth century revealed it, with its majesty and beauty, itself acting as an inspiration for poetry and song. It was the time of the landscape gardening of Le Nôtre, when the formal garden planned to resemble a drawing-room was the ideal, the days of lawns called *tapis verts*, of clipped shrubbery disposed as furniture. Interest was centred on the moral study of man, what we call *human* nature, guided by definite laws and principles. If one transcended the microcosm, the conception of nature was of a coherent system of laws expressive of the social order [1] and best exemplified in the life of civilized countries and of their capitals, where wit and taste hold sway.[2] Nature is not only " all sorts of material Objects and every species of Substance whatsoever, but also general Notions and abstracted Truths, such as exist only in the Minds of men and in the property and relation of things one to another." [3]

In their use of the word Nature, many of the critics were, therefore, groping to express the Universal of Aristotle and the ideas found, for instance, at the beginning of Chapter IX of the *Poetics*:

[1] Cf. Spingarn, *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, Introd. p. lxvii.

[2] " Il faut la capitale d'un grand royaume pour y établir la demeure du goût." — Voltaire, *Dictionnaire philosophique*, Art. *goût*. The *bourgeois* and commercial classes do not have *goût*, only the leisured classes. Louis XIV was born with *goût*.

[3] Robert Wolseley, Preface to Rochester's *Valentinian*.

It is, moreover, evident from what has been said that it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen — what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity. The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose. The work of Herodotus might be put in verse, and it would still be a species of history, with metre no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular. *The universal tells us how a person of given character will on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity;* and it is this universality at which Poetry aims in giving expressive names to the characters. The particular is — for example — what Alcibiades did or suffered.[1]

In other words, the world of the universal is one of a higher and more permanent reality than the world of everyday experience seen in the chronological sequence of history; one of rationality and nature; one of general principles giving firmness, fixity, and balance to the universe as we interpret it.

From what goes before it appears that *esprit* or " Wit " in its highest sense, as opposed to that wit which is mere cleverness, is a " true and lively expression of Nature," or as Pope puts it:

> True Wit is Nature to advantage dressed,
> What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed.[2]

Hence the importance of the rules, which are " Nature still, but Nature methodized "; and " to copy Nature is to copy them."

[1] Professor Butcher's translation. Cf. his discussion of the universal in the essays accompanying his translation.

[2] Cf. *Essay on Criticism:*

> First follow Nature, and your Judgment frame
> By her just standard which is still the same;
> Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,
> One clear, unchanged and universal light,
> Life, force, and beauty must to all impart,
> At once the source, and end, and test of Art.
> Art from that fund each just supply provides,
> Works without show, and without pomp presides.
> In some fair body thus th' informing soul
> With spirits feeds, with vigour fills the whole;
> Each motion guides, and every nerve sustains,
> Itself unseen, but in th' effects remains.
> Some to whom Heav'n in wit has been profuse,
> Want as much more to turn it to its use;
> For Wit and Judgment often are at strife,
> Tho' meant each other's aid, like man and wife.

Thus, too, we understand the significance of Boileau's advice to the writers of comedies: "Que la nature donc soit votre étude unique." They must study the moral nature of man, his ages and passions. Molière said to the same effect: "Lorsque vous peignez les hommes il faut peindre d'après nature."[1] To the strict and docile classicist it was safe to imitate the ancients. When Virgil, according to Pope, began to prepare his *Aeneid*, "Nature and Homer were, he found, the same." At any rate it was safe to re-echo Boileau's "Jamais de la nature il ne faut s'écarter," and follow the principles of reason. Otherwise one would sacrifice all *vraisemblance* and go astray either among the incoherent and uncoördinated facts of crass realism, or get lost amid the fantasies of preciosity or the equally reprehensible extravagances of the burlesque.

Vraisemblance! This is one of the catchwords of modern classicism. It implies "probability" in poetical treatment, all that is in conformity with the opinion of the public, and expresses that inclination towards a higher realism of which the seventeenth century was fond. In poetry, says Rapin, the *merveilleux* and the *vraisemblable* are both in place and should be mixed without offending reason. *Vraisemblance* is even more perfect than truth, for truth makes things out only as they are, and *vraisemblance* makes them as they ought to be. In the drama *vraisemblance*, or Verisimilitude, becomes one of the chief cares of the poet and is the underlying motive of the famous rule of the three unities.

But even *vraisemblance* is, in a sense, subject to restrictions on which all rules depend. The true basis of *vraisemblance*, says Rapin, is *la bienséance* or Decorum, understood not as mere good manners, but as the nobler proprieties manifested in the proper working of the great laws of human morals. Objection is made in the *Sentiments* of the Academy that Corneille in the *Cid* violates the *bienséance des mœurs* of Chimène, who though presented to the spectator as virtuous, nevertheless decides to marry the slayer of her father. Whatever the possible reality of such an incident,

[1] *Critique de l'Ecole des femmes.*

Corneille should have violated the truth and have purified it by bringing it under the higher principle of Propriety.

Even solicitude for verisimilitude and the proprieties does not suffice. Particularly in those thoughts, says the Père Bouhours, which enter into *les ouvrages d'esprit* truth is not enough, though it is essential. Truth is fidelity of thought and should show itself in verse as well as in prose.[1] But truth may become commonplace and trivial. It is advisable to impress the mind with something striking, just as the solidity of a plain building needs to be set off by grandeur, agreeableness or delicacy. In intellectual things the corresponding ornaments or qualities are *le sublime*, *l'agréable* and *le délicat*. In all three the Natural [2] must be sought and not the Affected, which may exist in thought as well as in words, and is likely to result in overdoing the sublime, the agreeable and the delicate.[3]

Boileau, the translator of Longinus, is especially significant for the vogue of the Sublime as a factor of criticism. According to Longinus the sublime is a certain loftiness and excellence of language which strikes home and sinks deep, which transports the soul, and it depends both on natural endowments and on art.[4] The sublime therefore signifies the sudden flash by which the poet carries us from the confines of our wonted feeling to a higher plane. Boileau and Bouhours both repeat, after Longinus, as an example of the sublime the Biblical: " Let there be light: and there

[1] " A la fiction près, le vrai doit se rencontrer dans les vers comme dans la prose." — Bouhours, *Manière de bien penser dans les ouvrages d'esprit* (First Dialogue).

[2] " Qu'entendez-vous donc, dit Philanthe, par ce que vous appelez naturel en matière de pensée ? — J'entends, repartit Eudoxe, quelque chose qui n'est point recherché ni tiré de loin; que la nature du sujet présente, et qui naît pour ainsi dire, du sujet même." — Bouhours, *Manière de bien penser* (Second Dialogue).

[3] Cf. Boileau, *Art poétique*, Chant Ier, ll. 101–102:

> Prenez mieux votre ton. Soyez simple avec art,
> Sublime sans orgueil, agréable sans fard.

[4] " Pour le sublime, il n'y a, même entre les grands génies, que les plus élevés qui en soient capables." — La Bruyère, *Des ouvrages de l'esprit*. La Bruyère finds sublimity in Corneille: " Ce qu'il y a en lui de plus éminent c'est l'esprit qu'il avait sublime."

was light." Among modern examples both mention the " Qu'il mourût " of Corneille's *Horace*. Rapin, indeed, extends the sublime to all things, even to human beings, and finds the sublime of magistracy in the Président de Lamoignon, of war in Turenne, of private life in Condé and of public life in the King!

To Bouhours the sublime, the agreeable and the delicate are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Voiture is Bouhours's ideal of the agreeable, but Voiture rubs shoulders with Virgil and Homer, and Bouhours quotes Boileau's *Art poétique* in corroboration of the *agréments* of Homer:

> On dirait que pour plaire, instruit par la nature,
> Homère ait à Vénus dérobé sa ceinture:
> Son livre est d'agréments un fertile trésor,
> Tout ce qu'il a touché se convertit en or,
> Tout reçoit dans ses mains une nouvelle grâce,
> Partout il divertit, et jamais il ne lasse.

Délicatesse, says Bouhours, is more easy to define in perfume, viands or music than figuratively. Intellectually it adds to the sublime and the agreeable an indeterminate something, a *je ne sais quoi*, which the Eudoxe of Bouhours's dialogue himself found difficult to explain.

The phrase *je ne sais quoi* was a convenient and constantly recurring expression. At one of the early meetings of the Academy a paper was read on this subject, and Bouhours included in his *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène* an essay on *le Je ne sais quoi*. It was a mysterious and indefinable something adding a supreme grace and a final touch to a beautiful work. The term was used in almost every sort of contingency to delude people into a belief that an unknown x was a known a. Even Grace is to Bouhours a *je ne sais quoi* and all nature is full of " ces je ne sais quoi qu'on ne peut expliquer." A discussion of the phrase was a constant opportunity for critical elusiveness.

People nowadays, who are taught to admire the extraordinary and the mysterious and who find poetic inspiration in the awe of the immeasurably great, must realize the great contrast offered by

the feeling of some seventeenth-century critics towards the "Vast." Saint-Evremond, for instance, in his dissertation *Sur le mot de Vaste*, criticizes the Vast as a defect, and says that it should never properly be employed in praise. The Great is perfection, but the Vast, being limitless, implies lack of measure. Things that are vast are more akin to the horrible than to the agreeable. A vast solitude is a wilderness, a vast house shocks the eye, vast apartments are unsuited for habitation, vast gardens lack the charm of art, vast forests terrify, vast landscapes bewilder. Similarly a vast imagination loses itself in idle dreams and hallucinations. We see here very distinctly the frame of mind which conceives beauty only in the distinct and the orderly. La Bruyère, less censoriously says in his chapter *Des ouvrages de l'esprit* that "Les esprits vifs, pleins de feu, et qu'une vaste imagination emporte hors des règles et de la justesse, ne peuvent s'assouvir de l'hyperbole."

The seventeenth-century writers had much to say about the end and aims of poetry. Three possibilities present themselves: the object of poetry may be pleasure, or profit, or it may be a combination of the two. Most critics remember the Horatian precept, *omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci*. Molière in the *Critique de l'Ecole des femmes*, Racine in the preface of *Bérénice*, Boileau in the *Art poétique*, all declare that the object of poetry is to please, or to please and touch.[1] But delight does not prevent instruction. Poetry, says Rapin in his treatise on poetry, quoting Horace, has for its purpose pleasure but especially profit, and all poetry which is against morals is dissolute and vicious. The rules, authors felt, were very helpful to this end in preserving the general spirit of order and decorum. Hence, when the cautious and irresolute Corneille undertook to discuss the purpose of tragedy in his various prefaces, *discours* and *examens*, he said that its purpose is to please, but it must please in harmony with the rules, and at the same time tragedy may have an improving value by means of the *sentences* or moral statements with which it is

[1] Molière and Racine are dealing especially with the Drama.

sprinkled, as well as the lessons taught by the picture of vice and virtue, and by witnessing the happy outcome of virtue and the baneful results of crime.[1]

No sooner had classicism fought its way to the front than it met new enemies. It is a mistake to think that the doctrine held undivided sway and that all its teachings were meekly accepted. The most important controversy was, however, not so much an opposition to the new literary forms as a rebellion against the consecrated models of the past and a declaration of independence of them. The contest was known as the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns, and it was but one phase of an almost perennial dispute. In our day it is the battle in education between the partisans of Latin and Greek, on the one hand, and the advocates of modern languages as a substitute, on the other. In the seventeenth century it was a wrangle between two forms of literary nationalism. One party felt that the present greatness of French literature was due, in a large measure, to the inspiration and imitation of the master writers of Greece and Rome. The other was convinced that the present age of Louis XIV had paid its debt to the age of Augustus and now surpassed it, that the moderns were superior to the ancients. The chief spokesman for the Ancients was Boileau, for the Moderns Charles Perrault, and their immediate dispute was a tempest in a teapot. Boileau and his fellow Ancients found themselves, as leading writers of the reign of Louis, in the position of proclaiming the supreme excellence of their predecessors. The Moderns were in the even more

[1] In English dramatic criticism we frequently come across the expression "poetic justice." The idea of strict reward or retribution for right or wrong was implicit in some French dramatists, but it was not held as a specific element of tragedy as it was by Rymer who gave vogue to the idea in England, followed by Dryden and Dennis. A well-known passage by Addison (*Spectator*, No. xl) shows that the theory had its critics even in England: "The English writers of tragedy are possessed with a notion, that when they represent a virtuous or innocent person in distress, they ought not to leave him till they have delivered him out of his troubles, or made him triumph over his enemies. This error they have been led into by a ridiculous doctrine in modern criticism, that they are obliged to an equal distribution of rewards and punishments, and an impartial execution of poetical justice."

paradoxical necessity of consecrating the very writers who were their chief opponents. During the controversy the sense of balance was inevitably lost, as when Fontenelle in his *Digression sur les Anciens et les Modernes* included the *Ariane* of Thomas Corneille among works superior to the best plays of Sophocles, Euripides or Aristophanes.

Charles Perrault wrote a poem, called *le Siècle de Louis le Grand*, which began with the often quoted lines:

> La belle antiquité fut toujours vénérable,
> Mais je ne crus jamais qu'elle fût adorable.
> Je vois les anciens sans plier les genoux:
> Ils sont grands, il est vrai, mais hommes comme nous;
> Et l'on peut comparer, sans crainte d'être injuste,
> Le siècle de Louis au beau siècle d'Auguste.

He afterwards elaborated his views much more fully in the *Parallèles des anciens et des modernes* to the great disgust of Boileau, in time still more irritated by the references to himself in Perrault's *Apologie des femmes*. The result was Boileau's *Réflexions critiques sur Longin*, which were really more remarks on Perrault. Before many years were over the two chief opponents were reconciled, and Boileau's letter to Perrault of 1700 made all sorts of polite concessions and courteously agreed that, all in all, the age of Louis XIV was superior to that of Augustus.

The real significance of the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns lies, as its chief historian H. Rigault [1] points out, in the opposition between radically different critical postulates. The Ancients conceived literary ideals as already achieved long ago. The Moderns were literary exponents of Cartesian rationalism and conceived that reason can always progress to a "better" state. The theory, true enough of science and of classified knowledge, was very hazardous when applied to the art of a literary genius. Among other things Perrault cited the invention of printing to prove the superiority of the present to the past. The

[1] With all respect to H. Gillot's conscientious *la Querelle des anciens et des modernes en France.*

Ancients could with justice retort that printing had had nothing to do with the genius of Homer or of Racine. Moreover, the superciliousness of the Moderns was partly ignorance. Polite society had small Latin and less Greek and knew antiquity, not at first hand, but through imperfect translations. The Cartesian idea of progress was destined to become in the eighteenth century a governing principle of that scientific age, and helps to explain the theories of social and economic reconstruction which came to such a violent climax in the French Revolution. The Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns is the beginning of the end of the supremacy of seventeenth-century classicism.

CHAPTER IX

THE DRAMA

How great was the break between the tragedy of the Pléiade and that of the seventeenth century is a disputed question. The answer depends partly on the uncertain point whether the sixteenth-century plays belonged to the general *répertoire*, or could be acted on a stage of the time. The chief theatre of Paris was the Hôtel de Bourgogne, where the traditions of the mediaeval plays persisted in the simultaneous stage-setting, or *décor simultané*, by which several places were portrayed at once, instead of successively, by different fragmentary portions of the background. This tradition prevailed until well into the seventeenth century, and it is the best explanation of the performance of the plays during the first half of that century which do not pretend to conform to the unity of place.[1]

On the other hand, the humanistic tragedies of the sixteenth century, from Jodelle to Garnier and his contemporaries, were performed, when at all, chiefly in colleges and *châteaux*.[2] Yet it is probable that authors wrote their plays with the idea of performance. Such a conclusion, at any rate, makes the tragedies of Montchrestien, for instance, no longer isolated examples, but part of a recognized tradition, thus paving the way for the *Sophonisbe* of Mairet and the regular classical tragedies.

Be that as it may, the early seventeenth century shows, on the acting stage, the greatest variety of dramatic forms or, at any

[1] These theories have been largely developed in the writings of E. Rigal.

[2] On the question of public performances of sixteenth-century plays, *pro* or *con*, see J. Haraszti, edition of Schelandre's *Tyr et Sidon*, p. xxxiii and references; C. Searles, *The Stageability of Garnier's Tragedies*, in *Modern Language Notes*, vol. xxii; Rigal, *De Jodelle à Molière*, Lanson, *les Origines de la tragédie classique en France*, in *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France*, 1903.

rate, of names. We are reminded of Polonius's description of the players. There were tragedies, moral or allegorical, tragi-comedies, pastoral tragi-comedies, tragi-pastorals, *bergeries*, *histoires tragiques*, and many others.

Alexandre Hardy was the most prominent purveyor of such miscellaneous works. Regular hired poet connected with a company of actors who came to Paris from the provinces, Hardy was a skilful manufacturer of *acting* plays, rather than a man of letters. His merit is to have given life to the dramatic forms, and it is in this sense that he has been called by some the "creator of the modern French drama."

Four forms soon stood out pre-eminently: tragedy, comedy, tragi-comedy and pastoral. For a while, indeed, pastoral and tragi-comedy were the most popular *genres*. From 1620 to 1630, for instance, the pastoral stands for the party of rules and of reason, of dramatic conventions, the party which looked back to Renaissance tragedy and comedy, and which itself was to lead to the regular tragedy of the seventeenth century.[1] Tragi-comedy, on the other hand, was more independent. The actual designation of a pastoral play varied: "pastorale, comédie pastorale, tragédie pastorale, pastorale tragique et morale, tragi-comédie pastorale." [2]

The Pléiade had made a spasmodic and futile effort to copy the comedy of antiquity and of Italy. It amounted to little and ended with the school. If we except the comedies of Larivey, themselves adapted from the Italian, which comedies we cannot with certainty affirm to have been acted, there is an interruption in comedy at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The ever-popular farce supplies the desire for boisterous amusement, and the pastoral is the substitute for genuine comedy.[3]

[1] Cf. Marsan, *la Pastorale dramatique en France*, Preface, p. xi, and p. 389. François Ogier, in his preface to *Tyr et Sidon* (*Ancien Théâtre français*, vol. viii, p. 10), calls the partisans of rules and of ancient poetry *les doctes* as opposed to *les modernes*. The antithesis is frequent in the seventeenth century.

[2] Marsan, *op. cit.* p. 337.

[3] Marsan, *op. cit.* pp. 346 and 348.

Meanwhile tragi-comedy [1] was reaching a vogue the decline from which was more slow than that of the pastoral. The tragi-comedy was the freest of the dramatic forms. It depended for its interest on incident and on plot, rather than on psychological analysis as tragedy was destined to do. Consequently, it paid less attention to the unities, the plots were apt to be *romanesques*, the *dénoûment* was a happy one, the characters were less definitely and consistently confined to the world of kings and heroes, lighter touches often appeared in the *rôles* or in the language. French tragi-comedy arose in the sixteenth century, the most famous being Garnier's *Bradamante* (1582). It helped to carry over to Hardy the tradition of the serious drama such as the mystery, secularized but with its freedom of subject and treatment. Hardy gave the tragi-comedy vogue by his numerous plays, and in the period down to about 1628 it had constantly increasing popularity. All the imaginative and fantastic subjects were here welcome: " dreams, ghosts, disguises, recognitions, duels, shipwrecks, captures by pirates, human sacrifices." [2] The extraordinary was an important element of tragi-comedy. Hence the English heroic play of love and valor is largely indebted to it. During the greatest vogue of the tragi-comedy, from about 1628 to 1650, noted writers contributed: Rotrou, Mairet, Du Ryer, Georges de Scudéry, even Corneille himself. *Le Cid*, for instance, was written as a tragi-comedy. However, with the increasing prestige of tragedy, tragi-comedy lost its repute and the term was used to cover an omnium gatherum of plays that were not vulgar. By Molière's death tragi-comedy had almost ceased to exist.

French classical tragedy, which makes so much of the rules of the ancients and seems, at first sight, learned in its origins, was, we know, in no small degree influenced by the drawing-rooms and by the patronage of the theatre-lover and would-be dramatist, Richelieu. French monarchs since Valois times had favored letters, and during the Renaissance, the royal house, with its Italian affilia-

[1] On this dramatic form, cf. H. C. Lancaster, *The French Tragi-Comedy*.

[2] Lancaster, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

tions, had imitated the patronage of Italian princes. In the early seventeenth century, before the days of Louis XIV, men and women of fashion took the lead, and became interested even in the technique of the drama. The comte de Carmail and the cardinal de la Valette led Mairet to the rules and to the theories of Scaliger and Heinsius, as we learn from the preface of *Silvanire*. Just as Vaugelas was ready to take the ladies as arbiters of language, so deference was paid to their views in the discussions in *alcôve* and *ruelle*.[1] Said the abbé de Pure in his *Idée des spectacles*, " Pour les règles de l'art ce sont les dames qui décident du mérite de ces choses." [2] " Vraiment c'est un sujet pour une comédie," says Sestiane in Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin's *Visionnaires*, and her gossip about the rules is no exaggeration of life. Women undoubtedly helped also in the general improvement of taste which began to condemn the indecency of the farces and encouraged literary comedy.

Richelieu's desire was to lead the regulars. He had not only a general literary secretary, Boisrobert, but his own authors, the board of five, to compose plays under his direction, and his critics to formulate and teach the rules. These critics included Chapelain, Scudéry, La Mesnardière and the abbé d'Aubignac.[3] This last even proposed to enroll actors and actresses, so as to control their lives and improve their morals. Thus the drama would be supervised, not only in the persons of authors, but of performers.[4]

It is a mistake to think that the Middle Ages had no concept of tragedy and comedy, even though the forms were not cultivated. Still, the ideas of the French seventeenth century were drawn, not from the Middle Ages but, as we have seen in a previous chapter, from modern, many of them Italian, commentators of Aristotle.

[1] There was plenty of hostility to the theatre in the seventeenth century, as the experiences of Molière and the *Maximes et Réflexions sur la Comédie* of Bossuet testify.

[2] Quoted in Arnaud's *Etude sur la vie et les œuvres de l'abbé d'Aubignac*, p. 177.

[3] D'Aubignac and La Mesnardière, both important dramatic critics, both authors of wretched tragedies.

[4] Arnaud, *op. cit.*, p. 197. Cf. *supra*, p. 63.

Certain interpreters were important above others, and the ideas of the French were largely influenced by the *Poetics* of Scaliger, as concentrated in the little treatise on tragedy of Heinsius, and given new vogue by Chapelain and Mairet. The physician and would-be poet Jules de la Mesnardière tried to win favor with his patron Richelieu by his unfinished *Poétique*, which is to a great degree a discussion of Aristotle and Castelvetro, influenced by Scaliger and Heinsius, together with destructive criticism of Castelvetro as insufficiently Aristotelian, and numerous examples based on ancient plays or on La Mesnardière's own dramatic attempts. It was probably Richelieu's hope that La Mesnardière would write for the French a definitive handbook of criticism and be the new Aristotle or Scaliger. Georges de Scudéry's attacks had undoubtedly an influence on Corneille's important tragedies. The Latin treatise on poetry of the Dutch scholar Vossius (1647), *De artis poeticae natura, ac constitutione*, and the *Pratique du théâtre* of the abbé d'Aubignac (1657), register the standard views of the seventeenth century.

The theories of tragedy of course go back to Aristotle, " notre unique docteur Aristote," as Corneille calls him in the preface of *Héraclius*, so great that, as La Mesnardière says, " Reason itself seems to borrow the voice of Aristotle." According to Aristotle tragedy " is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of those emotions." [1]

Among modern critics Julius Caesar Scaliger was placed by some on a level with Aristotle, and Vossius, in his preface, involves the two together. Scaliger defines tragedy as an imitation by action of some illustrious fortune, having an unhappy outcome, in noble language expressed in verse.[2] Scaliger also says, a little

[1] *Poetics*, vi.2, Butcher's translation.

[2] " Imitatio per actionem illustris fortunae, exitu infelici, oratione gravi, me-

earlier in the same chapter, partly under the influence of mediaeval concepts of tragedy, that it treats of kings and princes and the dealings of cities, fortresses and camps.[1]

The theory of French tragedy in the seventeenth century revolves to a considerable degree about the idea of *vraisemblance*, verisimilitude or probability, often coupled in discussion with *le nécessaire*. The famous rules of the unities were merely a way to secure enhanced verisimilitude or probability of action.[2] The dramatic poet was to present his story, not with photographic realism, but in such a way as to remain within the bounds of likelihood and consistency.

The origins of *vraisemblance* are to be found in Aristotle's *Poetics*, Chapters IX, XV, XXIV, and XXV. There it is stated that the function of the poet is to relate, not what has happened but " what may happen — what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity." [3] Aristotle's interpretation was a transcendent, suprasensible view of life, as tragedy portrayed the great stories of mythology. The French turned this into realism, though their idea of aristocratic decorum made them avoid sordid realism.

As to Character, several things were to be considered, among which were propriety, truthfulness to life, and consistency. In plot, as well as in character, " the poet should always aim at the necessary or the probable." The plot must not consist of incidents rejected by reason; incident and plot must be developed in

trica." — Scaliger, *Poetics*, Bk. I, ch. vi. Heinsius's definition of tragedy (*De tragoediae constitutione*, ch. ii) is: " Tragoedia est seriae absolutaeque actionis, et quae justae magnitudinis sit, imitatio; sermone, harmonia, et rythmo, suaviter condita." Mairet, in the preface of *Silvanire*: " Tragédie n'est autre chose que la représentation d'une aventure héroïque dans la misère." Vossius's treatise on poetry (Bk. II, ch. xi): " Tragoedia est poema dramaticum, illustrem fortunam, sed infelicem, gravi et severa oratione imitans."

[1] " In Tragoedia reges, principes, ex urbibus, arcibus, castris. Principia sedatiora: exitus horribiles." — Bk. I, ch. vi.

[2] R. M. Alden's *The Doctrine of Verisimilitude* in the *Matzke Memorial Volume* (Leland Stanford University, 1912) is an incomplete study of the question.

[3] Ch. ix. Cf. *supra*, p. 108.

a plausible way, and even a " probable impossibility " is to be preferred to a thing improbable yet possible. Thus the reality of tragedy is in a sense different from the reality of everyday life and moves on a higher plane. The rule of the " necessary " and the " probable " refers not so much to the sequence of events as " to the internal structure of a poem; it is the inner law which secures the cohesion of the parts." [1]

Thus the general tendency of French critics in the seventeenth century was to make *vraisemblance* much narrower than the Verisimilitude of Aristotle, and to use the unities as a means to enforce this narrower *vraisemblance*. For instance, Chapelain, at times, made *vraisemblance* an effort towards realistic identification rather than artistic harmony. " Je pose donc pour fondement que l'imitation en tous poèmes doit être si parfaite qu'il ne paraisse aucune différence entre la chose imitée et celle qui imite." [2] This led to an attempted identification between the performance and the thing represented, and the unity of time tried to give approximate plausibility to the period supposed to elapse in the five acts. The unity of place was used to get round the *invraisemblance* which would result if a spectator saw different places pass before his eyes. As a matter of fact, even Chapelain outgrew his early rigidity, and later realized that *vraisemblance* could not mean such absolute identity. But the greatest of the critics, entangled in the unities, interpreted the matter more narrowly than did Aristotle. The warfare between the regulars and the independents was waged largely about the question of the unities. The regulars liked to narrow things down and to assert dogmatically what is in truth only the registration of a tendency. In the sixteenth century there had been a formulation of rigid rules in time forgotten. In the seventeenth century the same phenomenon was repeated.

As to *vraisemblance*, the critics, ever seeing Aristotle through a glass darkly, began to distinguish two kinds: the *vraisemblable*

[1] Butcher, *Poetics*, ch. iii, p. 155.

[2] Cf. *Dissertation inédite*, No. iv, in appendix of Arnaud's study of the abbé d'Aubignac.

commun or *ordinaire* and the *vraisemblable extraordinaire*. The former included things which ordinarily occur to men, "as when a merchant seeks profit, a child does imprudent things, a spendthrift falls into poverty." The latter includes things which are exceptional, as for a crafty scoundrel to be tricked, or a strong man vanquished. Sometimes the *vraisemblable* was preferable to the *vrai*, when even the *vrai* was contrary to reason, the good of society, propriety or the rules of art.[1]

The abbé d'Aubignac supplies us with the rules of *vraisemblance* classified, cut-and-dried. The *Pratique du théâtre* was begun in 1640 during Richelieu's lifetime, but was not published until 1657. Verisimilitude is to him the essence of a dramatic poem, and he distinguishes between the *vraisemblable*, the *vrai* and the *possible*. The *vrai* and the *possible* are not necessarily the object of the theatre, but only in so far as they have *vraisemblance*, so that all circumstances must be eliminated which have it not, and everything which is to be represented must be brought under its power. Now *vraisemblance* to the abbé d'Aubignac amounts to conformity with the feelings of the spectators. These must not be jarred, even at the cost of historical accuracy. Moreover, as the audience was a seventeenth-century French one, it happened that the real, that is to say real history, often had to be softened and made unreal in order to harmonize with the needs of the audience. Hence historical infidelity was justified in the interest of the verisimilitude of an age of decorum. Boileau says in the third canto of the *Art poétique*:

> Jamais au spectateur n'offrez rien d'incroyable.
> Le vrai peut quelquefois n'être pas vraisemblable.[2]

[1] *Sentiments de l'Académie sur le Cid.*

[2] Cf. La Mesnardière's *Poétique*, p. 34: "Encore que la vérité soit adorable partout, la *Vraisemblance* l'emporte ici dessus elle; et le *Faux qui est vraisemblable*, doit être plus estimé que le Véritable étrange, prodigieux et incroyable: pourvu, comme nous avons dit, que l'Aventure qu'on expose ne soit point de l'Histoire sainte, qui doit paraître en son entier, ou ne paraître point du tout:

> Ficta voluptatis causa sint proxima veris,
> Nec quodcumque volet poscat sibi Fabula credi;
> Neu pransae Lamiae vivum puerum extrahat alvo."

The connection of the unities with the above theories is obvious. The unity of action may be taken for granted as necessary in any well organized play.[1] The unities of time and place grow out of the misapprehension of Aristotle.

Concerning the unity of time Aristotle merely says that a good tragedy endeavors (πειρᾶται) to confine itself to a single revolution of the sun, or *not to exceed that limit very much.* The modern critics turned this statement of a tendency into a rigid law, and said that the action of a tragedy *must* be confined to a single day. Aristotle says nothing about the unity of place. The abbé d'Aubignac blandly tells us that Aristotle did not mention the rule because it was too obvious.[2]

Credit was long traditionally given to Chapelain for the reintroduction of the unities in France. The ancedote has often been repeated which Pellisson told in his history of the French Academy, how Chapelain enunciated the rules to his surprised companions on issuing from one of the meetings.[3] Undoubtedly Chapelain had very much to do with the new vogue of the unities, and he probably got many of his ideas concerning them from Castelvetro.[4] In turn he won over Richelieu to the cult of the unities.

But if Chapelain is important in the early history of the unities, Mairet was contemporary with him in practice. His *Silvanire*, a "pastoral tragi-comedy" of 1630 was limited to twenty-four hours. When published the following year it was accompanied by its famous preface. Then Corneille heard of the new ideas and

[1] "Je tiens donc, et je l'ai déjà dit, que l'unité d'action consiste, dans la comédie, en l'unité d'intrigue, ou d'obstacle aux desseins des principaux acteurs, et en l'unité de péril dans la tragédie, soit que son héros y succombe, soit qu'il en sorte." — Corneille, 3e *Discours*.

[2] *Pratique du théâtre*, Bk. II, ch. vi.

[3] Collas, in his study of Chapelain (pp. 97–98), denies the truth of this story.

[4] Castelvetro "is responsible for the ushering of the unities into dramatic criticism and for the theory of the difficulty overcome." — Charlton, *Castelvetro's Theory of Poetry*, p. 211. On Castelvetro as the chief source of Chapelain, cf. Bovet, *la Préface de Chapelain à l'Adonis*, in the *Festschrift* to Heinrich Morf, *Aus romanischen Sprachen und Literaturen* (1905), p. 27.

wrote *Clitandre*, and there were several other prefaces to plays by Isnard, Gombaud and Rayssiguier. In 1634 we come to the first regular tragedy, Mairet's *Sophonisbe*.

Because we hear so much of the simplification effected by the unities of time and of place, we must not think that either unity stood for something identical in all writers. The Aristotelian term " a revolution of the sun," interpreted as a " day," was so vague that it was susceptible of meanings ranging from twenty-four hours to the artificial day of twelve. Other critics wanted eight or six, down to the absolute identification with three hours' time. Similarly the limit of place was made to range from a single room to a single palace or a single city.

A restriction from which French tragedy suffered quite as much as from the unities was a narrowing in meaning of part of Aristotle's description of tragedy as an imitation of characters of a " higher type." [1] The characters of tragedy as of epic, according to Aristotle, are to have heroic grandeur.[2] In the French aristocratic age the Greek notion of moral grandeur was interpreted as meaning social grandeur. The personages were kings and heroes of high degree. They alone were considered worthy of being subjects of tragedy, as if the lowly were not good enough to experience emotions and undergo tribulations, but could only be subjects of comedy. In France, says the abbé d'Aubignac,[3] people born or brought up among the great deal with lofty sentiments and tend to noble purposes. Hence their life is in harmony with what tragedy depicts. On the other hand, the populace, virtually wallowing in filth, do not rise above the buffoonery of farces.

Obviously Corneille and Racine are the best expression of French classicism. But in Corneille one certainly notes marked changes as his literary career progresses, and he is distinctly in-

[1] *μίμησις σπουδαίων*, v. 4.

[2] " Greatness cannot take the place of goodness. Satan, though he were never 'less than archangel ruined,' is not, under Aristotelian rules, a fitting character for an epic poem." — Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, p. 217.

[3] *Pratique du théâtre*, Bk. II, ch. i, *ad finem*.

fluenced by his critics. Corneille, of course, must not be looked upon as a full classicist, but at times as regular against his will.

Corneille embodies the spirit of the first half of the seventeenth century. The vigor and dash of the warlike age of Richelieu combine with the turgid and romanesque influences and the complicated plots of the Spanish drama. With these elements appears a veneer of the language fashionable in the drawing-rooms, where the fastidiousness of growing preciosity and the reading of fiction were developing *galanterie*. Corneille's early comedies are in this polite mannerism. He is at first heedless of rules because, as he says in the *examen* of *Mélite*, he did not know of their existence and had as guides only " a little common sense and the examples of the late Hardy." His first tragedy, *Médée*, is Senecan and bombastic; and Spanish turgidness shows itself to some extent in his earliest great success, the tragedy, or rather tragi-comedy, *le Cid*.

In this play one sees more distinctly than before Corneille's use of material and his adaptation of it to suit the French temperament and growing classicism. Corneille takes a passionate Spanish love-story permeated with a fierce honor or pride. This story he proceeds to rationalize and to harmonize with the rules. But Corneille's efforts to compress within fashionable limits a long drawn out plot could not avoid loose joints. These were greedily seized by jealous rivals, anxious moreover to curry favor with Richelieu, already unfavorably disposed towards Corneille. Mairet was at that time in general opinion a greater writer, and Richelieu preferred Scudéry to Corneille whom he accused of lacking *esprit de suite*. So these authors stirred up criticism of *le Cid*, and Scudéry brought definite charges against it. These were in time laid before the newly established Academy, of which a committee under the guidance of Chapelain proceeded to pass judgment. The verdict was in many ways a compromise. The play was justified as to its main structural features in the existence of a sufficient plot; it was criticized as lacking verisimilitude in many ways (true but not truthful), and the conclusion was that " though

the subject of *le Cid* is not good, though it sins by its solution, though it is burdened with useless episodes, though proprieties are often transgressed as well as a good dramatic arrangement, and though it contains many bad verses and inelegant forms of expression; nevertheless, the truth and force of its passions, the strength and delicacy of many of its thoughts, and that undefinable charm which pervades even its defects, have won for it an important place among French poems of its kind which have given most satisfaction."

Lenient as this verdict was by many thought to be, the sensitive Corneille was hurt. His next few plays, *Horace*, *Cinna*, and *Polyeucte*, show the result of criticism, and give evidence of yielding, however unwillingly, to the demand for structural regularity by obedience to the unities and by a plot of greater *vraisemblance*. In time Corneille again works away from these restrictions: he always chafes more or less at the unities, and his idea that the good tragedy should not necessarily end by a disaster but may justify itself quite as well by arousing wonder or admiration (*merveille*), caused him to feel that the subject of a great tragedy need not or should not be *vraisemblable*. It is by the plays ranging from the *Cid* to *Pompée* that Corneille's classicism is generally tested, though it is our duty to take into account his own favorites like *Rodogune*, *Nicomède* or *Héraclius*.

Corneille tries, then, to rationalize his men and women and to introduce at least an elementary psychology. He wishes to make them heroic embodiments of a feeling, say of honor or duty, and to display them face to face with some great crisis which they surmount by strength of reason or will power. Consequently, in Corneille character is emphasized which depends on a psychology however crude.

It is precisely this desire to show the heroic conflict of the superman that leads Corneille to the exaggerations of later plays when, as in *Rodogune*, Cléopâtre was exposed to the criticism that strength of will becomes mere violence, and the exceptional rather than the great is the object of portrayal.

Corneille has fully set forth his theory of tragedy in various writings, such as prefaces to individual plays, or the three *Discours sur l'art dramatique*, and the *examens* of 1660.[1] These critical essays composed fairly late in life may be looked upon as rejoinders to Chapelain, and more especially to the abbé d'Aubignac. Corneille is troubled by the cramping influence of the unities, particularly as some of his early plays, like the *Cid*, were written before the traditions of the *décor simultané* had been abandoned.

The unities of time and of place are, therefore, a hindrance, and Corneille tries to get round these conventions by other conventions. Some of his plays, like *Rodogune* or *Cinna*, might be conceived, he says, as not exceeding in time the two hours or so required for their performance. Others need more, and Corneille would like latitude for different cases, while trying to avoid going much beyond twenty-four hours. He would really like to leave the time indeterminate and not emphasize the question too much.

As to place, after suggesting the confines of a single city or two or three localities within its walls, he again gravitates towards a "*fiction de théâtre*," such as a vague apartment on which open the rooms of the chief characters.[2]

Thus Corneille unfortunately did not always have the courage of his convictions: he was inclined to hedge and make concessions to his critics by trying to prove that, after all, he and they were really in agreement, and especially that he was in harmony with the teachings of Aristotle.

Corneille's first treatise, *De l'utilité et des parties du poème dramatique*, is characteristic of this hedging. The purpose of a tragedy is to please (as, indeed, he had said years before in the preface of the *Suivante*), but it must please according to the rules.

[1] See such works as J. Lemaître, *Corneille et la poétique d'Aristote*, or Lisle, *Essai sur les théories dramatiques de Corneille*.

[2] To Corneille, be it remembered, the unity of action is the unity of "peril," and he admits that his *Horace* sins in making the hero undergo two dangers.

Corneille enunciates certain specific " utilities " of a dramatic poem, four in number.[1] Though the purpose of a tragedy is to please, still it may inculcate lessons by its sententious passages and moral instructions; it will have an effect by its truthful portraiture of virtues and vices; the happy outcome of virtue will excite us to embrace a similar course and the baneful results of crime will increase our natural horror. Finally, it will effect the purgation of the passions through pity and fear. We may well feel that this allusion to the Aristotelian doctrine of the *katharsis* by Corneille is largely a matter of formal fidelity to Aristotle. In his *Poetics* Aristotle had made a casual and obscure remark that the effect of tragedy is to " purge " the passions through pity and fear. This ambiguous statement has been interpreted by critics in half a hundred ways, some moral, some aesthetic, and some medical. In fact the literal, medical interpretation, enunciated by the Frenchman H. Weil, followed by the German Bernays, is the one generally accepted now. Corneille's rendering is, at all events, very unlikely to be genuinely Aristotelian: " The pity for a misfortune, in which we see our fellow-beings fall, leads us to fear a similar misfortune for ourselves; this fear makes us desire to avoid it; and this desire leads us to purge, moderate, rectify, and even uproot in us the passion which before our eyes plunges into this misfortune the people whom we pity, for the common, but natural and indubitable reason, that to avoid the effect one must eradicate the cause." Thus, by the pity and fear excited through tragedy, we are led to avoid the passions which brought about the misfortunes of the characters involved.[2]

In the course of time Corneille finds himself distinctly at vari-

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 112.

[2] Professor Butcher, starting from the medical interpretation, reaches the following conclusions: " Greek tragedy, indeed, in its beginnings was but a wild religious excitement, a bacchic ecstasy. This aimless ecstasy was brought under artistic law. It was ennobled by objects worthy of an ideal emotion. The poets found out how the transport of human pity and human fear might, under the excitation of art, be dissolved in joy, and the pain escape in the purified tide of human sympathy."— *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, p. 252.

ance with his critics as to *vraisemblance*. His fondness for portraying the *volonté* and the strong-willed characters or supermen, and his desire to show them grappling with obstacles, leads him to prefer what is *invraisemblable*. It is to him a false maxim that "il faut que le sujet d'une tragédie soit vraisemblable." He adds, "Il n'est pas vraisemblable que Médée tue ses enfants, que Clytemnestre assassine son mari, qu' Oreste poignarde sa mère; mais l'histoire le dit, et la représentation de ces grands crimes ne trouve point d'incrédules. Il n'est ni vrai, ni vraisemblable qu' Andromède, exposée à un monstre marin, ait été garantie de ce péril par un cavalier volant, qui avait des ailes aux pieds; mais c'est une fiction que l'antiquité a reçue; et comme elle l'a transmise jusqu' à nous, personne ne s'en offense quand on le voit sur le théâtre."

So in the preface to *Héraclius* he reaches the often quoted conclusion that the subject of a fine tragedy should not be *vraisemblable*, because unusual ones are best adapted to awakening pity and fear. Thus the melodramatic side of Corneille is explained and accounted for, and we have the *raison d'être* of a character such as Cléopâtre in *Rodogune*. Moreover, in spite of the *Cid*, love should occupy a secondary place in tragedy, the dignity of which calls for some great state interest, or a more noble and vigorous passion (*passion mâle*) than love, such as ambition or revenge. Corneille replaces love plots by historical intrigues and political dissertations in dramatic form. Love is the embellishment rather than the material of a tragedy.

In another way Corneille sometimes deviates from the conventional conception of tragedy. He admits a happy ending, if it be impressive enough to arouse wonder or admiration. Aristotle in the *Poetics* (xxiv) admits the wonderful (*τὸ θαυμαστόν*), which, however, seems to him to mean rather a form of the irrational. Therefore, though permissible in tragedy, it is more fitted for epic poetry, where the improbability is less noticeable. But in Corneille *τὸ θαυμαστόν* is the justification of plays like *Cinna* or *Nicomède* on the one hand, and of *Rodogune* on the other. The

two former plays have a happy ending, yet need not (at least *Cinna*) be called merely tragi-comedies because they are supposed to produce in the spectator a feeling of admiration. *Rodogune* deals with atrocities, but again the spectator is supposed to be under the spell of wonder. Boileau says in his well-known letter of 1700 to Perrault:

Pouvez-vous nier que ce ne soit dans Tite-Live, dans Dion Cassius, dans Plutarque, dans Lucain et dans Sénèque que M. de Corneille a pris ses plus beaux traits, a puisé ces grandes idées qui lui ont fait inventer un nouveau genre de tragédie inconnu à Aristote ? Car, c'est sur ce pied, à mon avis, qu'on doit regarder quantité de ses plus belles pièces de théâtre, où, se mettant au-dessus des règles de ce philosophe, il n'a point songé, comme les poètes de l'ancienne tragédie, à émouvoir la pitié et la terreur, mais à exciter dans l'âme des spectateurs, par la sublimité des pensées et par la beauté des sentiments, une certaine admiration, dont plusieurs personnes, et les jeunes gens surtout, s'accommodent souvent beaucoup mieux que des véritables passions tragiques.[1]

[1] Admiration was, according to the critics, originally a function of poetry in general, along with instruction and delight. Then it was raised to the level of pity and fear as a function of tragedy. See Gregory Smith's *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, vol. i, p. 392. The *merveille* of Corneille has a precursor in the *maraviglia* of Castelvetro. See Charlton's *Castelvetro's Theory of Poetry*, p. 191: " What Castelvetro meant precisely by his ' maraviglia ' is not clear. At any rate, the ' verisimile ' prevented any wild flights. But any theory which propounds the effect of the marvellous as the primary aesthetic function is false, and has the manifold dangers of all falsity. Its place is in the art of melodrama, not in the art of poetry. The Heroic drama which dazzled almost all Europe in the seventeenth century is its offspring; and under the power of its enchantment Corneille turned from such masterpieces as the *Cid* and *Horace* to produce monstrous imbroglios like *Rodogune*." Aristotle (*Poetics*, ch. xiv, 9: suggests the justification of Corneille's happy ending to tragedy: " Thus in the *Cresphontes*, Merope is in the act of putting her son to death, but, recognizing who he is, spares his life. So in the *Iphigenia*, the sister recognizes the brother just in time. Again in the *Helle*, the son recognizes the mother when on the point of giving her up." Note the following passages from Vossius: Bk. II, ch. xi: " Julio Scaligero lib. i. de re Poëtica cap. vi. definitur, imitatio illustris fortunae, exitu infelici, oratione gravi metrica. Ubi illud non probare possum, quod requirat exitum infelicem. Plurimum quidem id fit; sed non est de οὐσίᾳ [materie, naturaque] tragoediae. In multis enim id Graecorum tragoediis non videas; ut postea dicetur. Quare differentia εἰδοποιὸς [specifica, sive formae effectrix], qua differt a comoedia, in eo constitit, quod graves actiones imitatur; eoque graves etiam personas assumit. Sed, utcumque non semper exitus sit infelix; semper tamen infelix conditio, vel grave periculum, ob oculos ponitur. Nam affectus ei movere propositum est, in-

In *Don Sanche d'Aragon* Corneille introduces another novelty, which he declares in his dedication to have no parallel among the ancients. This is the heroic comedy which may deal with kings and princes, without plunging them into the dangers in which tragedy or tragi-comedy puts them. It is, therefore, an intermediary between tragedy and comedy. The name has survived in modern drama, though a *comédie héroïque*, such as *Cyrano de Bergerac*, is obviously a very different thing in its ending from *Don Sanche d'Aragon*, which differs but little from the tragi-comedy.

When we come to Racine [1] we reach the perfection of the classical school, and a theory of dramatic poetry which harmonizes without difficulty with the most stringent rules of the critics.

To begin with, the plots of Racine are simpler, and depend for their interest not so much on situations as on characters. They are plays of psychological realism, concerned with Racine's age, even though the characters and plots seem to belong to mythological or heroic times. They portray single crises, so that the action is concentrated and brief, and the unities of time and place are no longer hindrances. This does not mean a lack of action, for a tragedy is to Racine "l'imitation d'une action complète où plusieurs personnes concourent." The action was as far as possible personal and original, for Racine's theory of invention was "faire quelque chose de rien." [2] He found his starting-point in an *état d'âme* of some person or persons, usually in antiquity, and developed it. Almost invariably it was a love-crisis. Conse-

primis misericordiam." — Bk. II, ch. xiii, par. 19: "Maximeque conveniunt actiones, quae habent τὸ ἐλεεινὸν, ἢ τὸ φοβερὸν, miserabile ac terribile. Vt sunt caedes, incestus, aliaque indigna, et atrocia. His addere possis τὸ θαυμαστὸν, admirabile." — Par. 31: "Neque, si exitus sit laetus, eo nomen tragoediae amittitur: quia non est de οὐσίᾳ ejus, ut exitus sit tristis. Alioqui minor pars tragoediarum Euripidis, quae quidem hodie exstent, tragoediae esse desinerent. Quare si, quod est οὐσιῶδες, attendamus; satis est, si facies ejus sit luctuosa et anxia; ita ut in atroci, et ancipite illustrium personarum fortuna, natura tragoediae clare eluceat."

[1] See such works as Robert, *la Poétique de Racine*, and Le Bidois, *la Vie dans la tragédie de Racine*.

[2] Preface of *Bérénice*. Invention = imagination, cf. p. 107.

quently, the complication was in the workings of human souls and not in adventures and hairbreadth escapes. The whole play had to follow strict *vraisemblance* under the guidance of reason.

So the tragedies of Racine offer us a simple but impressive plot (" peu d' incidents et peu de matière " [1]), representing characters on an heroic scale, undergoing plausible and realistic psychological experiences, usually connected with the passion of love, set forth in dignified and polished poetry. By individual cases drawn from mythology or history are illustrated the great truths of life, as valid now in the seventeenth century, as in the days of Pyrrhus or of Nero.[2]

In Corneille and in Racine we see the culmination of dramatic effort. But it must be remembered that these writers were not absolutely typical. They created and led, instead of being representative of the general average. Quinault and Thomas Corneille, younger brother of the great Corneille, are better examples of the general taste. The " lyrical tragedies " of Quinault incline to insipidity; Thomas Corneille treats the romanesque, at times according to Corneille, at times according to Racine, and his *Timocrate* with its eighty consecutive performances was the real success of the century. Voltaire wrote in his *Essai sur la poésie épique* that tragedy in France had become a series of conversations in five acts with a love plot. Rapin complained in his *Réflexions sur la poétique* that modern tragedy is not satisfied with pity and fear, but has introduced *galanterie* and love, the influence of women and of Spain; that plays are apt to have frivolous subjects, badly constructed plots, superabundant episodes, inconsistent characters, forced *machines*, the *merveilleux* instead of the *vraisemblable*, together with various other defects as they seem to him.

We have already seen how the seventeenth century in general conceived of comedy. It was not heroic and was " une représen-

[1] Preface of *Alexandre*.

[2] A more detailed analysis of the theory of Racine is unnecessary because it coincides so thoroughly with the general principles enunciated above in Part II, ch. 8.

tation d'une fortune privée sans aucun danger de vie." [1] The earlier comedies of the seventeenth century had tended to be coarse and disjointed compositions, often with complicated plots. To please they relied chiefly on incident. Scarron and his school practised the burlesque and intentionally anti-heroic comedy. Some popular plays were rough adaptations from Italian, or as time went on, from Spanish models.

Corneille's early comedies, beginning with *Mélite*, transform the vulgar and superficial play of incident into a comedy of manners consciously based on life, and deviating from it only in so far as the attempt to be literary encouraged in the author lapses into preciosity or the finical sentiment of *galanterie*.

Molière in time raises comedy to the highest dignity. He still cultivates the farce and the ballet, and seeks to enliven his plays by devices appealing to the eye and to the ear. But in his comedies of manners, like *les Femmes savantes*, and of character, like *Tartuffe* and *le Misanthrope*, we have plays of the highest art. Moreover, though he did not write *examens* as Corneille or as many plays as Corneille and Racine, he has in comedies such as the *Critique de l'Ecole des femmes* and the *Impromptu de Versailles* given suggestions of his dramatic theory. He remembers tag ends of criticism, like *castigare ridendo mores*.[2] But usually he disdains subservience to the rules: " Vous êtes de plaisantes gens avec vos règles," he makes one of his characters say in the *Critique de l'Ecole des femmes*, and he goes on to say that people talk as though these rules were the greatest mysteries in the world,[3] whereas they are only common-sense observations which can be made at any time without the help of Horace or of Aristotle.

In some respects comedy seems to Molière a greater achieve-

[1] Mairet, Preface of *Silvanire*.

[2] " L' emploi de la comédie est de corriger les vices des hommes." — Preface of *Tartuffe*.

[3] Racine says, in the preface to the *Plaideurs*, concerning the first performance that: " Ceux même qui s'y étaient le plus divertis eurent peur de n' avoir pas ri dans les règles."

ment than tragedy. It is easier, he says, to defy fortune in verse, to accuse fate and insult the gods, than to show up to the life the defects of human beings. A writer of tragedies creates his heroes as his fancy dictates and can give full flight to his imagination, abandoning the true for the marvellous. On the other hand, comedy is the realistic portrayal of men, and to be successful this portraiture must be not only lifelike, sensible and well written, but it must also be witty and achieve the difficult task of amusing people of taste and breeding. The purpose of comedy, Molière adds in the *Impromptu de Versailles*, is to represent all the defects of men and particularly those of the present time.

Those who consider the *Misanthrope* Molière's masterpiece see in it the perfect comedy of classicism. It is regular and it is a realistic psychological play. The action takes place in the soul of Alceste in the midst of that environment of the social life of the time to which it belongs. It is a comedy of character and of manners.

Because of the emphasis given to the regular drama and the attention devoted to the rules, it seems difficult to realize that tragedies and comedies formed only a part of the dramatic entertainments. The seventeenth century had also in reasonable quantity its irregular plays of which Molière's *Don Juan* was one, its *pièces à machines* with fairly elaborate stage settings and shifting scenery, such as Corneille's *Andromède* or Thomas Corneille's *Devineresse*. Some of these irregular plays were, like *Don Juan*, successors to the old *tragi-comédies* transformed from a heroic play with a happy ending to a fantastic drama. Then there were the " lyrical tragedies " of Quinault, interspersed with dance and song even more than were Molière's comedies with song and ballet. In time, however, music, song and ballet became identified with the opera, the destiny of which has been to outlive the formal tragedy and comedy. In the seventeenth century the opera had its opponents. Said La Bruyère: " Je ne sais comment l'Opéra, avec une musique si parfaite et une dépense toute royale,

a pu réussir à m'ennuyer." [1] Boileau, Racine, La Fontaine, and Saint-Evremond, all criticize it as a hybrid form.[2]

[1] *Des ouvrages de l'esprit.*

[2] A few minor peculiarities of tragedy may be mentioned. Critics speak much of the *nœud*, the *péripétie* and the *dénouement* to correspond to the complication of plot (δέσις), the reversal of action (περιπέτεια) and the solution of the moral situation (λύσις) of Aristotle. The division into five acts is Horatian. The dream *motif* was influenced by the shades and ghosts of Seneca. The objection to violent deaths on the stage followed the Horatian precept that " Medea must not slay her children *coram populo*." A character could come to breathe his last on the stage if the blow had already been struck behind the scenes. Stage madness was justified by Seneca (*Hercules furens*) and was borrowed by comedy, where it became an artificial and utterly unrealistic love madness. Cf. G. L. Van Roosbroeck, *A Commonplace in Corneille's " Mélite ": The Madness of Eraste*, in *Modern Philology*, 1919.

CHAPTER X

OTHER POETICAL FORMS

THE great poetic forms are usually considered to be, at least historically, the epic, the drama, and lyric poetry. The seventeenth century placed at the summit tragedy, comedy and the epic. But epic or heroic poetry, as it was perhaps even more frequently called, was one of the most ignominious failures of the age. Some critics followed Aristotle in placing tragedy first among the great forms; others, like Rapin, thought epic the highest. It was synonymous in public opinion with what was rare and exquisite.[1] Said Madelon in the *Précieuses ridicules*: "J'aimerais mieux avoir fait ce *oh! oh!* qu'un poème épique." The precepts of epic criticism were as elaborately worked up as those of the drama, and a writer of an epic poem scarcely ventured upon his task without consulting critics as well as masterpieces. Scudéry tells us in the preface of his *Alaric* that he had studied Aristotle, Horace, Macrobius, Scaliger, Castelvetro, Piccolomini, Mambrun and many others. He also had read the great epics of Greece, Rome and Italy, down to the *Franciade* of Ronsard and the *Saint-Louis* of Father Le Moyne. When Lady Froth, in Congreve's *Double Dealer*, planned her heroic poem, the *Syllabub*, she read "Bossu," Rapin and "Dacier upon Aristotle and Horace."

The epics were accompanied by the traditional paraphernalia of descriptions and comparisons of the approved Homeric pattern, as transmitted by the poets of the Renaissance. Old editions of *Alaric* contain indexed lists of one hundred and forty-six descriptions and one hundred and twenty-nine comparisons, ranging from the comparison of a boar and a general to that of thunder and the king of Sweden.

[1] On the epic in the seventeenth century, see Duchesne, *Histoire des poèmes épiques français du XVII^e siècle.*

The production of epics was not consistently uniform; it came rather at two periods. The early epics of the seventeenth century, unknown to fame as they are today,[1] were under the influence of Ronsard and Du Bartas. So we read of some *Franciades*, an *Austriade*, a *Magdaliade*, a *Mariade* and a *Christiade*. Accordingly they followed the traditional view of the Pléiade, which made the epic a mythological romance, or else they were religious narratives.

But the chief production of epic poems belongs to the middle of the century, lasting for a decade or more. To this period belong Le Moyne's *Saint-Louis*,[2] Scudéry's *Alaric*, Chapelain's *Pucelle*, to mention only some of the most important. These poems are well defined as moral romances based on history,[3] though we come again to religious titles, and are brought to the great conflict between the *merveilleux païen* and the *merveilleux chrétien*.

The seventeenth-century classicism was absolutely unable to appreciate the spirit of the old mediaeval epic. The *chansons de geste* and the romances had disappeared, except in so far as in their prose form they were considered uncouth legends, for which nobody save unexpectedly Chapelain (*De la lecture des vieux romans*) had a good word. A poem like the *Chanson de Roland* was considered rude and unpolished. On the other hand, the beauties of the Homeric poems were deemed the result of conscious study. Consequently, the model for the epic was Virgil, and the ideal heroic poem was the laborious and carefully wrought scholar's task. The epics were written under the influence of learning and the superstition of the rules. Virgil was esteemed on the whole above Homer.

But the imitation of Virgil was not unmodified. The influence of Tasso was considerable on the poets and critics of the period. Homer, Virgil and Tasso were the favorite authors of Father

[1] Cf. R. Toinet, *Quelques recherches autour des poèmes héroïques ou épiques français du XVII^e siècle.*

[2] " Nous n'avons aucun ouvrage en notre langue où il y ait tant de poésie." — Rapin, *Réflexions sur la poétique*, Part I, No. xxxi.

[3] Duchesne, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

Mambrun, who wrote a Latin *Dissertatio peripatetica de epico carmine*. Says Father Le Moyne in his *Traité du poème héroïque*: "Que dirai-je du Godefroy de Torquato Tasso ? C'est un héros de la force des anciens Grecs et des vieux Romains." More than one similar passage could be quoted.[1] Consequently, Tasso's romantic tale influenced the French epic, which was apt to be a romance in verse.[2] Dryden, writing under the influence of the epics of France and England, recalls in his *Essay of Heroic Plays*, that such a play ought to be an imitation, in little, of a heroic poem; and, consequently, that "Love and Valor ought to be the subject of it."

On the other hand, in some epics, the moral side was strongly emphasized. Voltaire, writing in the eighteenth century, says, in his *Essai sur la poésie épique*, that the current idea of *savants* about epic poetry is a long story invented to inculcate a moral truth, in which the hero achieves some great task, with the help of the gods, in the course of a year.

Thus the epic found itself hedged in by as many restrictions as tragedy, and some of these were clearly devised in order to make the two types symmetrical. In order to confine an epic to one year a writer would plunge *in medias res*, and with such a precedent as Aeneas's narrative to Dido would include earlier incidents in a similar recapitulation. Just so the writers of tragedies had got round the unity of time by the device of a dream.

Hence, the subject of a French epic poem is permissibly drawn, like the works of Virgil, from legends of antiquity, or it might be the poetical treatment of an historical subject, or even a romantic tale in heroic verse. It was, in the large majority of cases, intended to teach a moral lesson.

[1] "Tasso, the most excellent of modern poets, and whom I reverence next to Virgil." — Dryden, Preface to *Evening's Love*.

[2] Cf. Duchesne, *op. cit.*, pp. 81–82: "Malgré de notables différences de caractère et de talent, le frivole Scudéry, le mystique Desmarets, le grave Le Moyne et le docte Chapelain, se ressemblent tous par un point, l'esprit romanesque; tous voient dans l'Epopée une sorte de roman en vers; seulement ils le veulent moins chimérique, plus serré, plus moral que les romans ordinaires."

Father Le Bossu, the chief authority on the epic,[1] defines it as "un discours inventé avec art pour former les mœurs par des instructions déguisées sous les allégories d'une action importante, qui est racontée en vers d'une manière vraisemblable, divertissante et merveilleuse." [2] In fact, the first thing a poet should do is to decide his moral, and the story (*fable*) itself shall instruct under the form of allegory.[3] Thus an almost essential element of epic poetry was the *merveilleux*, that is, moral allegories, symbolical fictions or figurative language.[4]

So, then, the epic poets do for morals what theologians do for the divinity; [5] the poet is more suited to teach than is the philosopher; [6] and the epic is chiefly for *les mœurs et les habitudes* as tragedy is for the passions.[7] Heroic poetry was to Father Le Moyne as to Father Mambrun the expression of the philosophy of politics and of the court, which may be profitably used for the training of the great. Hence it could be full of erudition.

In spite of the constant use of the *merveilleux*, the epic poem should try to preserve verisimilitude. The poet was to build on

[1] "Lisez, lisez le P. le Bossu; il a fait un petit traité de l'art poétique, que Corbinelli met cent piques au-dessus de Despréaux." — Mme de Sévigné, Oct. 2, 1676.

[2] *Traité du poème épique*, Book I, ch. iii. Compare Boileau's *Art poétique* (Canto III):

> Là pour nous enchanter tout est mis en usage;
> Tout prend un corps, une âme, un esprit, un visage.
> Chaque vertu devient une divinité:
> Minerve est la prudence, et Vénus la beauté; etc.

[3] Rapin discusses the epic, not only in his Art of Poetry, but in his Parallel of Homer and Virgil: "Sa matière est une action héroïque, sa forme est la fable, sa fin est d'instruire les princes et les grands."

[4] Lord Chesterfield wrote to his son on Oct. 4, 1752: "You are so severe a Classic, that I question whether you will allow me to call his *Henriade* an epic poem, for want of the proper number of gods, devils, witches and other absurdities, requisite for the machinery: which machinery is (it seems) necessary to constitute the *epopee*."

[5] Le Bossu, *Traité du poème épique*, Book I, ch. ii.

[6] Le Moyne, *Du poème épique*.

[7] Le Bossu, *op. cit.* Cf. Dryden, *Dedication of the Aeneis*: "After all, on the whole merits of the cause, it must be acknowledged that the epic poetry is more for the manners, and tragedy for the passions."

truth. His first heed, said Le Moyne, should be to start from a firm foundation of truth drawn from history, and to avoid Pulci, Boiardo or Ariosto. Even then, it was to be a firm precept in epic as in tragedy that verisimilitude was more important than truth, that the *merveilleux* must be taken within the bounds of the *vraisemblable* and the possible. As with Corneille in tragedy the aim of epic poetry, according to Le Moyne, is to cause *admiration*.[1]

In time divided tendencies appeared in the treatment of the *merveilleux*. Boileau, for instance, advocated the *merveilleux païen*. It seemed irreverent to him to intermingle religion and fiction, and mythology had on its side the weight of literary tradition as an adornment for poetry. Moreover, art and architecture were permeated with pseudo-antiquity, and statues and fountains represented monarchs in Olympian garb, or Neptune and Tritons in the gardens of Versailles. Louis XIV was addressed in terms of mythology, and people danced mythological ballets. The writers who advocated paganism failed to realize that their pagan trappings did not express religion as did mythology to the ancients, which mythology in reality Christianity now stood for.

On the other hand certain writers, like Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin or Charles Perrault, more truly saw that the *merveilleux chrétien* occupied the same place in modern literature that mythology did in paganism, and advocated religious subjects with Christian concomitants. Coras very truly relegates Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, etc., to the almanachs.[2] They are good as names

[1] H. Chérot, *Etude sur la vie et les œuvres du P. Le Moyne*, p. 266. Cf. Dryden, *Preface to Annus Mirabilis*: "Such descriptions or images, well wrought, which I promise not for mine, are, as I have said, the adequate delight of Heroic Poesy; for they beget admiration, which is its proper object; as the images of the Burlesque, which is contrary to this, by the same reason beget laughter: for the one shows nature beautified, as in the picture of a fair woman whom we all admire; the other shows her deformed, as in that of a Lazar, or of a fool with distorted face and antic gestures, at which we cannot forbear to laugh because it is a deviation from Nature."

[2] See Delaporte, *Du merveilleux dans la littérature française sous le règne de Louis XIV*, p. 282.

for planets. Why encumber literature with them ? The party of the " Ancients " in the famous quarrel tended to the *merveilleux païen*, and the " Moderns " to the *merveilleux chrétien*, though the distinction was not absolute.

Pastoral poetry was one of the now obsolete forms in which the seventeenth century, like the sixteenth, took great delight. The traditions of Theocritus and of Virgil, combined with those of Neo-Latin poets and of the Italian and French authors of the Renaissance, were, as with the drama and the epic, reshaped into a half-erudite, half-aristocratic mould very remote from the simplicity of rustic or popular melody. Classicism demanded that even shepherds and shepherdesses should speak and act like gentlemen and ladies.

The idyls, as the pastoral poetry of French classicism was often called, had a quaint charm, but they were more remote from antiquity than the eclogues of Ronsard had been. Both Boileau, in his *Art poétique*, and Rapin, in his *Discours sur la pastorale*, emphasize the simplicity of thought and expression, and the delicacy and neatness of the pastoral. Rapin and Fontenelle say that the aim of the pastoral is to show the felicity of the Golden Age, that blessed time when sincerity and innocence, peace, ease and plenty reigned on earth, and the happiness of life led men to song and poesy. A pastoral was, therefore, the imitation of the actions of a shepherd or of one taken under that character.

As a matter of fact the shepherds of this rustic world were very sophisticated creatures, counterparts of those unreal beings who moved through pastoral romance or pastoral play. They were not always held by the confines of the technical eclogue, but appeared as well in song or in dramatic *intermède*, like shadow shapes of literature rather than of life. Henriette, in the *Femmes savantes*, begs Trissotin to spare her and go back to the Irises, Phyllises and Amaranths of his verses, and M. Jourdain, in the *Bourgeois gentilhomme*, exclaims in bewilderment: " Pourquoi toujours des bergers ? on ne voit que cela partout." Moreover, Rapin confessing that with regard to the pastoral he had not

Aristotle or Horace to guide him, and actuated by the usual spirit of system, evolved many restrictions.

The most important writers of pastoral poems, if we leave Racan's *Bergeries* to the drama, were Segrais, Mme Deshoulières and Fontenelle. Segrais imitated most closely of them all the Virgilian models, and his poems are those which have most charm. Mme Deshoulières, in her nature poems, steeped her human beings and her flocks of sheep in sugary sentiment. Fontenelle converted his pastoral characters into mere city-people draped by chance in a rustic stage costume. The shepherds of Theocritus were too coarse for him. They lacked the keen wit and gallantry of modern times. In fine, the pastoral poetry of the seventeenth century was as remote from life as the epic, but as it was less ambitious, it was not so difficult of achievement. Among the countless hackneyed phrases of love and the conventional lines we do often get a foreshadowing of the charm of Watteau's art.

Satire was another poetical form traditionally honored. Satire has always been an important trait of the French temperament, and the abundant parodies and burlesques of the early seventeenth century, together with the political lampoons and *mazarinades*, testify to its favor in the age we are considering. But we are here concerned with the formal satire. Horace, Persius and Juvenal, particularly the first and the third, were the deities of the modern satirists, who often treated in a new way the old topics. Horace was placed first, in the opinion of most, but the indecent side of Juvenal was an excuse for the treatment of scabrous subjects in the name of offended morals. So Regnier, at the threshold of the century, as Boileau expresses it, " offensait souvent les oreilles pudiques." Members of Regnier's school equalled in licentiousness their leaders. Boileau, lacking moderation himself when he undertook to write, like Juvenal, his own satire of women, was as a rule sufficiently dignified to meet the demands of his age. His satires are among his best titles to the name of the " French Horace." He passes from literature to morals with ponderous and stilted humor, and thinking to slay his

victims has occasionally given them immortality. Boileau practised also, in his *Lutrin*, the mock-heroic, a form of humorous verse verging on satire. It is the antithesis of the burlesque, which had sought to discredit its object of mockery by the indignity of a familiar treatment. The mock-heroic, on the contrary, dealt with a trifling topic in a highflown epic style. Perrault, in his fourth dialogue, calls the *Lutrin* a burlesque or, at any rate, a *burlesque retourné*.

Three forms — the *conte* or story in verse, the fable, and the verse epistle — are not treated by Boileau, though he himself wrote many epistles, and the fable was very popular. They need, however, little discussion. The *contes* of La Fontaine are humorous, often salacious tales, in tripping verse, frequently repeating old stories already known to readers of Boccaccio, or the *fabliaux* of the Middle Ages. La Fontaine fortunately did not have to square with any laws or rules decreed for the *genre*. In the fable, too, a writer could let his fancy run free. Here La Fontaine created his works of greatest genius and many other writers experimented in them. Some were in Latin and some, as those of Fénelon, in prose. The verse epistles of Boileau are a *pastiche* of those of Horace.

The position occupied by lyrical verse in the seventeenth century is, at first sight, rather puzzling to the modern student. Contemporary literature rates the lyric so high that one is surprised to find Boileau classifying it among the minor *genres*. We distinguish the true lyric so carefully from occasional verse and *vers de société* that we wonder at Rapin's classification of sonnet and ode, together with the rondeau and others, as usually works of imagination, but not of genius.[1] Yet Rapin does due honor to the Pindaric ode as lofty and majestic,[2] and Boileau recognizes the merit of some of these various forms. Boileau strains himself to the highest pitch to write an ode on the capture of Namur, and declares that " un sonnet sans défaut vaut seul un long poème."

[1] *Réflexions sur la poétique*, Part I, Sect. iii.
[2] *Op. cit.*, Part II, Sect. xxx.

The secret of the classification was that the lyric tended to be personal and hence was considered less capable of treating the great general ideas which were the fundamentals of modern classical literature. But, in spite of the dicta of authorities and however frivolous the form, it found favor in *salon* and *ruelle*.

The ode was of two kinds. On the one hand, it could be heroic and soar with Malherbe and Boileau, commemorating a victory or praising a king or prince. Some of the odes of Malherbe reach the highest dignity of modern classicism and proclaim the universal truths of life. Other odes are conventional eulogies and poems of praise, often written in the hope of a gratification or pension. A hungry muse cannot, as Boileau confesses, " subsister de fumée." On the other hand, the lighter ode in the anacreontic vein dealt with love and laughter. It merged often into the indeterminate *stances*, of which the characteristic, says Sarasin, was " d'être galantes et sérieuses tout ensemble." [1]

The " plaintive elegy in trailing garb of sorrow " was, the critics tell us, originally destined for tears and lamentation. But it later became a means for the expression of love, whether sorrowful or gay. Here, as in the *stances*, the lines of demarcation are indistinct, and Rapin declares that, though akin to heroic verse, " on appelle indifféremment Elégie parmi nous tout ce qu'on veut."

The sonnet had a great vogue towards the middle of the seventeenth century, but it was then more a *tour de force* and a test of cleverness than the strong love poems of the sixteenth century had been. Many of the actual examples were trifling, though one of the chief literary disputes of the period was between the partisans of the *Uranie* of Voiture and the *Job* of Benserade during the Fronde. Guillaume Colletet, in his *Traité du sonnet*, makes it somewhat akin to the epigram and points out that modern Latin writers usually translated " sonnets " into Latin as *epigrammata*. But he considers the sonnet not only as confined by greater metrical restrictions, but as being more grave

[1] Sarasin, *Défaite des bouts-rimés*.

and dignified than the epigram. Both poems in the seventeenth century often ended with a *pointe*, like the sonnet of Oronte in the *Misanthrope*. But Boileau, who passes from sonnet to epigram, as Colletet in his discussions had passed from epigram to sonnet, banishes the *pointe* from other forms than the epigram. This to him consists in a brief satirical jest in verse concluding with a point or witticism involving a play upon thought, but not appropriately degenerating into a mere pun. To Rapin Maynard seemed the best French epigrammatist.

The other poetical forms are of minor importance to consider. Guillaume Colletet wrote a treatise on moral and sententious verse, and one is somewhat surprised to see how long a list he enumerates of "poètes tétrastiches" who composed moral quatrains after the pattern in which Guy du Faur de Pibrac had won fame in the sixteenth century.[1] Among the quatrains of the seventeenth century he rates highest those of Godeau, Bishop of Vence, published under the title of *Institution du Prince chrétien*. In 1646 a priest named Pigeon turned the Psalms into French quatrains, much as Benserade retold the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid in rondeaux, or as Mascarille, in the *Précieuses ridicules*, was engaged in writing the history of Rome in madrigals. The *chanson* and its popular and plebeian subdivision, the satirical *vaudeville*, were of universal application. The rondeau and the ballade, mediaeval forms, had a considerable but temporary vogue about the middle of the century. By the time of the *Femmes savantes* the ballade "sent son vieux temps." The impromptu of whatever form, was the test of intellect and wit, the "pierre de touche de l'esprit";[2] the enigmas in verse were also "good exercise for the wit"; the *étrenne* or New Year's greeting was a minor diversion; the madrigal was an irregular, short poem of "gentleness, affection, and love." The *journée des madrigaux* in December, 1653, is an illustration of the grace and frivolity which often reigned. Mlle de Scudéry and her friends, gathered at the house

[1] The *Ecole des femmes* testifies to the vogue of quatrains.

[2] *Précieuses ridicules*.

of Mme Arragonais, were by a chance circumstance spurred to vie with each other in the impromptu composition of madrigals, which were gathered together for the delectation of posterity.

An example of the vogue of trivial forms is found in the history of the *bouts-rimés*. Sarasin, in the preface of his *Dulot vaincu, ou la défaite des bouts-rimés*, a mock-heroic poem, relates how an insignificant poet named Dulot was in the habit of beginning his sonnets by the rhymes; that is, by selecting rhymes to which he fitted lines. People took up Dulot's device as a pastime and, for a time, there was a great vogue of *bouts-rimés*. It died down but was revived when Fouquet, the famous *surintendant des finances*, wrote a jesting sonnet in *bouts-rimés* on the death of a parrot. By and large innumerable *bouts-rimés* were written, of which frequent subjects were the selfsame parrot or the recent capture of the town of Sainte-Menehould. But the *bouts-rimés* were in time used for the usual love making or *galanterie*.[1]

[1] Addison in the *Spectator* (No. lx) has an interesting criticism of *bouts-rimés*.

CHAPTER XI

PROSE FORMS

Prose in the seventeenth century was, it would almost seem, more diversified than that of to-day. In criticism especially we come across a varied terminology including *Dissertations*, *Réflexions*, *Discours*, *Observations*, *Remarques*, *Entretiens*, *Dialogues*, *Conversations*, *Eloges*, and *Parallèles*. The meaning of many of these terms is self-evident. It will be necessary in this chapter to consider specifically only certain of these forms in addition to the *genres*, such as fiction, which require a special study.

The history of prose fiction in the early seventeenth century is an important one; the part played by the novel in the classical school of 1660 is less so. It is to be noted that the palmy age of romance was in the first half of the century from the days of *Astrée* to the novels of Mlle de Scudéry. During this time fiction progresses from the purely pastoral type to the historical or semi-historical heroic romance in the writings of d'Urfé, Gomberville, La Calprenède, and Mlle de Scudéry. These were the works, particularly those of the divine "Sappho," which aroused the mirth of Molière in the *Précieuses ridicules* and of Boileau in his *Dialogue des héros de roman*.

The romances of the first half of the century were of interminable length, and their ambitious size as well as high-flown contents made many rank the *genre* in popularity with tragedy and epic. The novel was spoken of as a prose poem. The school of 1660 was less favorably disposed to novels, at any rate as hitherto cultivated. They were an obstacle to the drama and moral writings. Furetière, at the beginning of his *Roman bourgeois*, says that "un roman n'est qu'une poésie en prose." Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, alluding to his *Clovis*, wrote: "Le roman et le poème ne

diffèrent que d'une chose, savoir que l'un est en prose et que l'autre est en vers." [1] To Huet, the learned bishop of Avranches, novels were an " agréable amusement des honnêtes paresseux." Their subject was love and their purpose instruction. In his third dialogue Perrault speaks of Homer and the novels of Mlle de Scudéry as being not perhaps equal, but as filling corresponding places in literature.[2]

The abbé d'Aubignac, author of the *Pratique du théâtre*, once wrote an allegorical and pedagogical novel called *Macarise*. This work was about as worthless as his tragedy *Zénobie*, but in a very long prefatory essay he took occasion to classify the novels which had been popular, and his remarks at least help to distribute the forms of fiction. He divides them into three groups: historical novels, novels of imagination, and novels of manners and portraits.[3] The first kind, he thinks, is harmful to history itself by the false impressions produced of things based on fact. This, by the way, says he, is an error into which writers of tragedies and epics fall as well.[4] The second kind, novels entirely of the imagination, is to d'Aubignac scarcely worth mentioning; novels of the

[1] Quoted in Roy's *Sorel*, p. 227, n. 2. See Ker's edition of Dryden's *Essays*, vol. i, p. liv: " Scudéry, in the preface to the epic poem of *Alaric*, 1654, takes the relationship [of epic and novel] for granted; in the preface to his sister's romance of the *Illustrious Bashaw* he had cited Homer, Virgil, Tasso and Heliodorus as the authorities for that kind of fiction."

[2] Boileau, writing to Perrault in 1700 (ed. Berriat-Saint-Prix, vol. iv, p. 94), speaks of " ces poèmes en prose que nous appelons *Romans*, et dont nous avons chez nous des modèles qu'on ne saurait trop estimer, à la morale près qui y est fort vicieuse, et qui en rend la lecture dangereuse aux jeunes personnes." Boileau criticizes the novel unfavorably in the introduction to his *Héros de roman*.

[3] *Macarise*, particularly pp. 124–149 (ed. of 1664).

[4] " Les Tragiques . . . dont les ouvrages ne sont que des Romans d'un jour, comme le Poème Epique d'une année " (p. 128). — " On ne trouvera pas étrange que dans ce Discours je réduise les Romans à la même règle que les Poèmes Epiques, car ils ne sont distingués que par la versification, tout le reste leur est commun, l'invention, la disposition, la fabrique et les ornements; et je ne puis comprendre le sentiment de ceux qui se sont avisés d'en donner une nouvelle différence entre les règles d'Aristote et des autres savants, et de dire qu'il n'était pas nécessaire que le héros d'un Roman fût aussi vertueux que celui d'un Poème Epique, et qu'il ne pouvait tomber dans quelques faiblesses et faire des lâchetés " (p. 144).

third category, which like those of Mlle de Scudéry mingle modern characters under disguised names, are reprehensible because misleading.

Though we need not follow the abbé d'Aubignac in his desire to put allegory into fiction,[1] his criticism helps us, at any rate, to understand the point of view which literature was reaching. The novel is no longer pre-eminently narrative or description in high-flown, unreal language. Its subject is still usually aristocratic like the *Princesse de Clèves*, though not necessarily heroic (so the tragedies of Racine as compared with those of Corneille), and works like the *Roman comique* or the *Roman bourgeois* do not really belong to the classical school. The old novels were far from losing their readers, but the new ones became much shorter and developed an interest in psychology and the presentation of character and morals. They tried to be strictly *vraisemblables* and when, as often happened, they took the form of historical narratives, the authors sought to make the illusion so complete that it was hard for an uninitiated person to tell whether they were relating fact or fiction, to such an extent do we come upon anecdotes, pseudo-memoirs, and narratives, in which real or invented characters, and incidents true or imagined are inextricably entangled.

The literature of French classicism is chiefly interested in man. That interest takes the shape of psychological or moral studies. The former we find especially in the novel and in the drama, the latter is all pervasive and can appear, not only in romance and play, but also in satire, sermon or fable. Many technical moral treatises were written, as might be expected, as studies of passions and of morals, rather than as "essays" of which Montaigne had given an example. But one group of writings presents, under varying external forms, material for the delectation of polite society, desirous of being amused and stimulated rather than instructed. Prominent in this group were portraits, maxims, and characters.

[1] Cf. also his *Royaume de Coquetterie*, a brief allegorical sketch, which has been compared to Mlle de Scudéry's episode of the "Carte de Tendre."

Portraits were a peculiar feature of French seventeenth-century literature.[1] They were brief characterizations, usually in prose, sometimes in verse, dealing with the qualities of an individual, physical or mental, or both. They appear in fiction and as real descriptions, and are often in the first person.

A suggestion, which seems rather far-fetched, has been made that the form may have been copied from the famous *relazioni* of Venetian ambassadors.[2] In these were depicted the most important personalities of the court to which the ambassadors were accredited. These *relazioni* were, indeed, frequently imitated by European diplomats.[3] It is, at any rate, certain that the taste for portraits was largely due to the novels of Mlle de Scudéry, such as the *Grand Cyrus* and *Clélie*, filled with pen portraits of imaginary people or of real ones under fanciful names. They differ from the free and haphazard descriptions of modern fiction in being often composed in somewhat fixed forms, so that the general terms in which seventeenth-century descriptions are expressed tend to give them a somewhat close similarity.

Portraits were the fashion in society between 1650 and 1658, but these dates are not definite limits. They are found in novels with keys, in poems, in memoirs, in works like Bussy-Rabutin's *Histoire amoureuse des Gaules*, in the gossip of Tallemant des Réaux. It will be remembered that Mascarille in the *Précieuses* declared that, "Les portraits sont difficiles et demandent un esprit profond: vous en verrez de ma façon qui ne vous déplairont pas." There were portraits, precious, historical, political, and satirical. People looked for portraits in the sermons of Bos-

[1] Cf. Arthur Franz, *Das literarische Porträt in Frankreich im Zeitalter Richelieus und Mazarins* (Leipz. Diss). Also T. F. Crane's edition of the *Héros de roman*, Introduction, p. 124.

[2] A. de Boislisle, *Annuaire-Bulletin de la Société de l' Histoire de France*, 1896, vol. xxxiii, ed. of Ezéchiel Spanheim.

[3] Works like the *Cortegiano* may have had something to do with the genesis of the portrait. Polite society in Italy must have delighted in something similar.

suet or Bourdaloue.[1] The vogue was to a great degree increased through the influence of the Grande Mademoiselle. She states in her memoirs that in 1657 the princesse de Tarente and Mademoiselle de la Trémoille showed her their portraits composed in Holland. " Je n'en avais jamais vu; je trouvai cette manière d'écrire fort galante, et je fis le mien." She invited her friends to do the same, and in 1659 Segrais published the collection which, afterwards reissued in larger editions, had great vogue.

These portraits assumed a naïve frankness in setting down defects as well as qualities. They began with a description of the person's physical charms, which in a woman sometimes included details that delicacy might to-day refrain from mentioning. After this came the enumeration of mental and moral characteristics. In order to appear sincere the writer would magnify a few trifling defects. Among the most characteristic of the *genre* are Mademoiselle's own portrait and that of La Rochefoucauld by himself. In time portrait writing as a separate diversion ran itself out, and the satirical *Description de l'Ile de Portraiture et de la Ville de Portraits* of Charles Sorel (1659) contributed to that end. The same influence which produced the concise " portrait " favored the concentrated moral maxims such as those of La Rochefoucauld and the more lengthy characters of La Bruyère.[2] To try to find, as Victor Cousin did, a close connecting link between the *Pensées* of Pascal and maxims like those of La Rochefoucauld, through the common bond of Madame de Sablé and Port-Royal, appears rather far-fetched. The maxim seems like a concentrated and generalized portrait, as the character seems an

[1] Cf. Boileau, *Satire X*:

> " Nouveau prédicateur, aujourd'hui, je l'avoue,
> Ecolier ou plutôt singe de Bourdaloue,
> Je me plais à remplir mes sermons de portraits."

" Bourdaloue était le portraitiste en renom. On allait à ses sermons comme à une galerie où s'alignent des types." — Hurel, *les Orateurs sacrés à la cour de Louis XIV*, vol. ii, p. 31.

[2] In the *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France*, 1917–18, R. Toinet has a long bibliography of seventeenth-century maxims and moral reflections.

expanded one.[1] The thoughts of Pascal are, at first sight, like religious maxims, but we know them to be really notes and suggestions for a long work and consecutive argument. On the other hand, it is quite true that some of the thoughts of Pascal have the concentration, glitter and polish, even the vivacity and dramatic effect of maxims, as those on the grain of sand in Cromwell's bladder or the length of Cleopatra's nose. Moreover, thoughts were composed in the Jansenist *salon* of Mme de Sablé.[2]

The maxims, as cultivated by La Rochefoucauld, were in part the result of Jansenism, though religious feeling is absent from them. Composed in a polished lapidary style by a *blasé* and cynical man of the world, they none the less harmonize perfectly with views on life and on the corruption of mankind current in Mme de Sablé's Jansenist *salon* where they were discussed and worked up. She composed maxims of her own, as did her friend Jacques Esprit and the worldly chevalier de Méré.

But the writing of maxims was really of much wider prevalence than the mention of Mme de Sablé's *salon* would imply. They were favorite diversions of the circles of preciosity and of later drawing-rooms. Mme de Sévigné makes a maxim which she thinks so good that she feels it may be from La Rochefoucauld.[3] Corbinelli reduced Roman historians to maxims, beginning with Livy. In 1686 he says he has cut all Cicero into fragments like the maxims of La Rochefoucauld.[4] Arnolphe's maxims of marriage in the *Ecole des femmes* show the result in comic satire.[5]

[1] That contemporaries saw a connection between these different forms is shown by the title of Brillon's *Ouvrage nouveau dans le goût des Caractères de Théophraste et des Pensées de Pascal*, 1697.

[2] On some of these questions see R. Grandsaignes d'Hauterive, *le Pessimisme de La Rochefoucauld*, p. 140.

[3] Letters of Mme de Sévigné, vol. ii, p. 262.

[4] *Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 457 n.

[5] E. Roy, in his thesis on Charles Sorel, p. 248 says: "Les jeux partis n'avaient point été oubliés au XVI^e siècle, mais devenus avec le temps d'une rare naïveté, ils ne différaient plus de ces *dayeries* ou devinettes, qu'on peut entendre encore aujourd'hui dans les veillées de village. Ils reviennent à la mode au XVII^e siècle, sous la forme de *Maximes*, qui tantôt developpées dans de longues conversations, tantôt

The Character and the Memoir, the one general and impersonal, the other individual, are in a certain sense radically different; in another they are much akin, and have much in common with the portrait. La Bruyère had, of course, a prototype in Theophrastus, but, on the other hand, his chapters are universalized, or at any rate generalized portraits, sometimes of known individuals who can be identified, like Condé or Fontenelle,[1] often expressed in aphoristic paragraphs or sentences like maxims or thoughts. It is, moreover, probable that La Bruyère had composed the first version of his own *Characters* before he translated those of Theophrastus. The " character," then, fittingly belongs to a literature of moral observation and generalization.

Something the same is true of the memoirs of the time. Though necessarily more personal, nevertheless, as we have incidentally seen, the writers of memoirs, in the midst of gossiping details and passing comments, did not lose sight of moral characterization.

The word *éloquence* covers a variety of manifestations of the written and spoken word. The chief ones were religious discourses, sermons and funeral orations; that is, the *éloquence de la chaire*, and the profane oratory of the bar.[2] The unprejudiced student sees in both of these divisions conditions of varying excellence or imperfection. In the funeral orations of Bossuet classical eloquence reaches supreme dignity. Not only in style but in intellectual sweep the great bishop deserved the name of " eagle of Meaux." The sermons of Bossuet are simple and straightforward. His funeral orations, being of necessity formal eulogies of great people, called for ornateness and pomp. They

réduites en quelques vers, sont toujours discutées par les amis de l'auteur avant de recevoir leur expression définitive."

[1] " Je suis presque disposé à croire qu'il faut que mes peintures expriment bien l'homme en général, puis qu'elles ressemblent à tant de particuliers, et que chacun y croit voir ceux de sa ville ou de sa province." — *Discours de réception.*

[2] On oratory see such works as P. Jacquinet, *Des prédicateurs du XVII^e siècle avant Bossuet;* A. Hurel, *les Orateurs sacrés à la cour de Louis XIV;* Munier-Jolain, *les Epoques de l'éloquence judiciaire en France;* Aubertin, *l'Eloquence politique et parlementaire en France avant 1789.*

recall the ceremonial of the seventeenth century combined with the elaborate ritual of the Catholic church. But they are masterpieces of lucid thought, carefully arranged according to a preconceived plan.

Rapin says in his *Réflexions sur l'éloquence* that sublime genius calls for a gift of heaven and the work of centuries. The sovereign art, he also says, is to attach oneself to nature. This was good advice which orators failed to observe strictly. " Le discours chrétien," says La Bruyère, " est devenu un spectacle." [1] " Do we not see, every day," says Rapin in his *Réflexions* already quoted, "young preachers, without virtue and without learning, mount the pulpit as an actor goes on the stage to play his part ? "

Balzac, though no orator, did much by his essays and teachings to set the style for religious and profane rhetoric. His ponderous manner, with its self-conscious dignity and rounded Ciceronian periods, fostered the *grand goût* and the academic style. He established a prize of religious oratory to be administered by the Academy. A condition to which the teachings of Balzac contributed at least in part was that an oration, instead of seeking to " follow nature," became an end in itself and degenerated into artificiality. Not only the funeral oration but the ordinary sermon got to be a fashionable function instead of a moral exhortation. People went to a sermon to see and be seen. The preacher sought to attract admiration by his elaborate style, or especially in the days of license during the Fronde, to win an unworthy reputation by the flashy familiarity of trivial burlesque. But it was especially by forced antitheses of style, by strained allegorical comparisons and parallels, even by puns, that the preacher tried to win approval. Even *pointes* came into play and, as Boileau says in his *Art poétique*, " the preacher in the pulpit besprinkled the Gospel with them."

Of course such generalizations must not be too sweeping. The austere and sometimes ponderous style of the Jansenists was very remote from the florid manner of the fashionable Jesuits. But,

[1] *De la chaire.* This is an important essay for students of the times.

on the whole, the general tone of preaching was, through a considerable portion of the seventeenth century, defective, partly through the self-conscious style of which Balzac was the most noted representative. Any such result was, of course, far from his intent, and in his *Socrate chrétien* he advocates simplicity and sincerity in rather turgid language.[1] At any rate, La Bruyère and, in the eighteenth century, Voltaire agree upon the conventional arrangement of the ordinary sermon: " Ils ont toujours, d'une nécessité indispensable et géométrique, ' trois sujets admirables de votre attention.' " [2]

It was against the defects of fashionable preaching that the great orators reacted. Rapin says that the two greatest preachers of his time, not living, were the Père Claude de Lingendes and the Père Castillon, both Jesuits; La Bruyère alludes with praise, but without mentioning names, to the abbé Le Tourneux, a Jansenist, and the Père Séraphin, a Capuchin. But Bossuet, Bourdaloue, and Fénelon were the glories of French eloquence in the seventeenth or early eighteenth century. Massillon, Fléchier, and Mascaron, great as they were, were inferior to these.

The other chief form of eloquence was at the bar. Here, of course, the general literary influence of Balzac was also not without effect. But, for a time at least, legal oratory was entangled in lengthy periods like those of the Jansenist Antoine Le Maître.

[1] Jacquinet (*Des prédicateurs du XVII^e siècle*, p. 267, n.) quotes Bossuet himself on Balzac: "Selon ce que je puis juger par le peu de lecture que j'ai des livres français, les *Œuvres diverses* de Balzac peuvent donner une idée du style fin et tourné délicatement. Il y a peu de pensées, mais il apprend, par là même, à donner plusieurs formes à une idée simple. Au reste il le faut bientôt laisser; car c'est le style du monde le plus vicieux, parce qu'il est le plus affecté et le plus contraint. Mais il parle très proprement, et a enrichi la langue de belles locutions et de phrases très nobles." *Sur le style et la lecture des écrivains et des Pères de l'Eglise, pour former un orateur*, écrit adressé au jeune abbé-cardinal de Bouillon en 1669; publié pour la première fois par M. Floquet, tome II des *Etudes sur Bossuet*, p. 515.

[2] *De la chaire*. Cf. Voltaire: " Un sermon en France est une longue déclamation, scrupuleusement divisée en trois points, et récitée avec enthousiasme. En Angleterre un sermon est une dissertation solide, et quelquefois sèche, qu'un homme lit au peuple sans geste et sans aucun éclat de voix. En Italie, c'est une comédie spirituelle." — *Essai sur la poésie.*

Olivier Patru was more natural and avoided far-fetched quotations and forced parallels.

The famous trial scene in the third act of Racine's *Plaideurs* is an exaggeration rather than an absolute untruth. The preposterous speeches of Petit-Jean and L'Intimé are satires of legal oratory. Advocates, we are told, seemed more desirous of showing classical erudition and historical knowledge, of dazzling court and spectators by a display of learning, than of attending to the facts of the case. We can appreciate Judge Dandin's anxiety to have Petit-Jean get back from Japan " au fait de son chapon," and his request to L'Intimé to skip from the creation of the world to the deluge. Perrault, in his first dialogue on the Ancients and Moderns, quotes the speech of a lawyer for his daughter:

> Cette fille mienne, Messieurs, est heureuse, *quidem*, d'avoir épousé le sieur de la Hunandière, gentilhomme des plus qualifiés de la Province; malheureuse *autem* d'avoir pour mari le plus grand chicaneur du royaume qui s'est ruiné en procès et qui a réduit cette pauvre femme à aller de porte en porte demander son pain que les Grecs appellent *ton arton*.[1]

The newspaper and the haste of modern life have so diminished the length and importance of letters that we need to be reminded of their importance in the past. Even the epistolary novel is today almost obsolete.[2] But in olden times news was communicated by the pen, and in the days of the " epistles " people based on them in part their hopes of literary immortality. The correspondence of Cicero and of Pliny had been models to the humanists of the Renaissance eager for glory, and even when, like those of Etienne Pasquier, the letters were written in French, they preserved the stilted formality of communications to a more numerous audience than the different friends to whom they were addressed. The scholars of the early seventeenth century

[1] One cannot help thinking of Sganarelle in *le Médecin malgré lui* and his " le poumon que nous appelons en latin *armyan* " and " le cerveau, que nous nommons en grec *nasmus*."

[2] It may be not without interest to note, in passing, that the first American work of fiction was an epistolary novel, Mrs. Sarah Morton's *Power of Sympathy*, Boston, 1789.

nearly all left an abundant correspondence which is, indeed, very useful for our knowledge of the intellectual life of the period.

In time, however, the distinction grew more obvious between an epistle and a letter. Bouhours wrote:

> Epître ne s'emploie que dans épître dédicatoire, l'épître de la messe, les épîtres de saint Paul, Cicéron, Sénèque, Pline et d'autres anciens; pour indiquer des lettres en vers: épîtres d'Horace, de Boileau. Ailleurs on emploie lettre.[1]

In letter writing, as elsewhere, the importance of Balzac was considerable. A dweller apart from the busy life of Paris, "hermit of the Charente," and yet arbiter in matters of judgment and literary taste, he wrote a vast number of letters and became the great *épistolier* of France.[2] We have already touched upon the characteristics of Balzac's style, his self-love, his sonorous and high-flown diction. But Boileau, in his seventh *Réflexion sur Longin*, expressed the true verdict upon Balzac:

> Dans quelle estime n'ont point été, il y a trente ans, les ouvrages de Balzac! on ne parlait pas de lui simplement comme du plus éloquent homme de son siècle, mais comme du seul éloquent. Il a effectivement des qualités merveilleuses. On peut dire que jamais personne n'a mieux su sa langue que lui, et n'a mieux entendu la propriété des mots et la juste mesure des périodes; c'est une louange que tout le monde lui donne encore. Mais on s'est aperçu tout d'un coup que l'art où il s'est employé toute sa vie était l'art qu'il savait le moins, je veux dire l'art de faire une lettre; car, bien que les siennes soient toutes pleines d'esprit et de choses admirablement dites, on y remarque partout les deux vices les plus opposés au genre épistolaire, c'est à dire l'affectation et l'enflure; et on ne peut plus lui pardonner ce soin vicieux qu'il a de dire toutes choses autrement que ne les disent les autres hommes.

But the name of Balzac long remained one to conjure by as a model of dignity, just as Voiture was praised for the wit and charm of his letters. La Bruyère[3] coupled the names of these two

[1] Quoted in Rosset, *Entretien, doutes, critique et remarques du Père Bouhours sur la langue française*, p. 240.

[2] "Epistolier de profession en effet, et qui en avait patente." — Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du lundi*, vol. xi, p. 417.

[3] *Des ouvrages de l'esprit.* Chesterfield (July 20, 1747) recommends as models Cicero and Cardinal d'Ossat for serious correspondence, and Mme de Sévigné and Bussy for *enjouement* and *badinage.*

and lauded their grace and polish. But La Bruyère recognized another influence in letter-writing to which social life had given importance. Women are even more peculiarly suited to a happy choice of terms, delicacy, sentiment, and so forth. " Si les femmes étaient toujours correctes, j'oserais dire que les lettres de quelques-unes d'entre elles seraient ce que nous avons dans notre langue de mieux écrit."

Correctness was not always a matter of diction but, with some women, of spelling. Specimens of communications of even such a high placed and puissant dame as Françoise-Athénaïs de Rochechouart, marquise de Montespan, are appalling in the directness of their phonetic simplicity. But the mere mention of Mme de Sévigné is sufficient proof of the importance of women as letter writers. Unconscious of her own literary destiny, she is now read by thousands to each one who looks at the pages of Balzac.

In the sentimental novels that sprang up in France, letters often occupy half the volume. Heroic gallant novelists, from Gomberville to Mlle de Scudéry, employ them in increasing numbers. The letters are often intimately connected with the plot. Then they also form an entity of their own, either like Boursault's *Lettres de Babet* (1666) or the genuine *Lettres portugaises* (1669).[1]

The seventeenth century by no means confined itself to superficial drawing-room erudition. It had its great scholars in different fields of learning whose names are still remembered with respect to-day. Though Ménage might provoke Molière's mirth, yet Dacier or Mme Dacier could be laughed at only by the ignorant. Ducange, Baluze, Mabillon might head lists the length of which would be disproportionate to the present study. As might be expected, except for the independent and sound libertine scholars, learning was largely under ecclesiastical domination. The Congregation of Benedictines of Saint-Maur, founded in 1627, helped to make the name of Benedictine synonymous with

[1] On the early history of the epistolary novel, see an unpublished doctorate dissertation in the Harvard Library by C. E. Kany: *The Beginnings of the Epistolary Novel in the Romance Languages*, 1920.

tireless industry. In the times of Mabillon the abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés was a great centre of erudition. The Jansenist *solitaires* and the Oratorians won distinction for work which was technical and precise.

History,[1] more closely connected by its consecutive narrative with literature, was partly swayed by the traditions of Livy and of his modern disciples De Thou and Du Haillan. To Boileau Mézeray is synonymous with painstaking exactness.[2] The same accuracy can hardly be asserted of the numerous biased or partial memoirs and *souvenirs* to which we have already alluded. The century is to be credited with contributions to journalism in the founding of the periodical of Théophraste Renaudot. But the jingling *gazettes* of Loret (in prosaic *verse*), did but chronicle small beer. Even great writers failed when they tried to go beyond their sphere. Racine wrote a very creditable history of Port-Royal, but both he and Boileau came to grief when they sought to record the deeds of Louis the Great.[3]

[1] Cf. Monod, *Du progrès des sciences historiques en France depuis le XVI^e siècle* in *Revue historique*, 1876; Ch.-V. Langlois, *Manuel de bibliographie historique* (2^e fascicule, livre i): *Les études historiques depuis la Renaissance jusqu'à la fin du XVIII^e siècle.*

[2] *Art poétique*, Canto II, l. 79.

[3] Mme de Sévigné wrote to Bussy (Nov. 3, 1677): "Vous me parlez fort bien, en vérité, de Racine et de Despréaux. Le roi leur dit, il y a quatre jours: 'Je suis fâché que vous ne soyez venu à cette dernière campagne; vous auriez vu la guerre, et votre voyage n'eût pas été long.' Racine lui répondit: 'Sire, nous sommes deux bourgeois qui n'avons que des habits de ville; nous en commandâmes de campagne; mais les places que vous attaquiez furent plus tôt prises que nos habits ne furent faits.' Cela fut reçu agréablement. Ah! que je connais un homme de qualité à qui j'aurais bien plutôt fait écrire mon histoire qu' à ces bourgeois-là, si j'étais son maître." We read in the *Mémoires sur la cour de Louis XIV* of Primi Visconti (ed. Jean Lemoine) p. 245: "Racine était à la mode aussi bien que Despréaux, son compagnon inséparable. On les appelait les philosophes; je les ai connus tous les deux. Racine est très pédant, mais Despréaux est homme de jugement; il a composé plusieurs satires pleines d'esprit et il me confia qu'il s'occupait d'histoire, plus par ordre que de sa propre inspiration. Le maréchal d'Estrades m'aborda un autre jour en souriant et me dit: Je vous avais bien dit que nos historiographes feraient mieux de s'en retourner à leurs rimes. Ces messieurs ont lu hier chez Madame de Montespan quelques parties de leur histoire; le Roi secouait la tête et de temps en temps il disait tout bas à Madame de Montespan: 'Gazettes, Gazettes.'"

Dryden, in his preface to the translation of Ovid's *Epistles*, says that there are three forms of translation: metaphrase, paraphrase, and imitation. The French seventeenth century preferred the second and the third of these methods. Much of the knowledge of Rome was drawn from the once admired but now forgotten history of Coeffeteau, which was largely a paraphrase of Florus. But not all translations were as remote from the originals as the famous *belles infidèles* of Perrot d'Ablancourt, in which, as in tragedy, an unconscious preference for contemporary instead of historical *vraisemblance* caused the translator to modernize the ancients and use names or descriptive terms which were absolute anachronisms.

Little need be said concerning the various miscellaneous forms enumerated at the beginning of this chapter.[1] These remarks, observations, *entretiens*, etc., were often in the form of dialogues, in which, though the rule was not absolute, it was not customary to introduce more than three characters.

[1] The tenth book of Tassoni's *Pensieri diversi* determines the form of Perrault's *Parallèles*. Cf. Spingarn, *Seventeenth-Century Essays*, vol. i, p. lxxxix.

CHAPTER XII

ART

The tendencies of classicism show themselves just as distinctly in seventeenth-century art as in letters.[1] The fondness for system and the spirit of centralization were as manifest here as elsewhere. The establishment of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in 1648 corresponded to that of the French Academy, and the control of Colbert, its "protector," was as definite and far-reaching as that of Richelieu had been. It marks the assumption of authority over art, of which the Academy had, so to speak, the monopoly. The Academy at Rome linked official French art with that of Italy. Testelin's "tables of precepts" methodically catalogued the artistic rules; Charles Le Brun was the acknowledged manager of art and the deviser of its concrete manifestations. Thus grew up the so-called Academic School, conventional and systematic, in which painting became more a science than an art.

The greatest painter of the early classical school was Nicolas Poussin. With him the theory of the *beau idéal*, which in art corresponds much to following "reason" in poetry and criticism, is not so definitely formed. Poussin was the ardent admirer of the ancients and of Italy, where he spent much of his life. But he was chiefly intellectual. He sought particularly by intelligent and assiduous study of the ancients to acquire the pure harmony of plastic form. Reason meant to him the critical sense expressive

[1] The following works, among others, may profitably be consulted: L. Courajod, *Leçons professées à l'Ecole du Louvre*, vol. iii; P. Desjardins, *la Méthode des classiques français* (article on Poussin); A. Fontaine, *les Doctrines d'art en France*; L. Hourticq, *l'Art académique*, in *Revue de Paris*, June and July, 1904; H. Jouin, *Conférences de l'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture*; H. Lemonnier, *l'Art français au temps de Richelieu et de Mazarin*; H. Lemonnier, *l'Art français au temps de Louis XIV*; P. Manuel, *Charles Le Brun*.

of the inner meaning rendered through symmetry and harmony.[1] A mediocre colorist, he took as models, besides the ancients, the eclectic school of Bologna, the Carracci and Domenichino, as well as the harmony of Raphael's outlines.

Very rapidly, along with the foundation of the Academy of Painting and Sculpture, there grew up the rigid doctrine of "Academism," in which the "reason" of Poussin was, like the literary models, interpreted in the sense of discipline. Poussin imitated with a certain independence and originality; the Academists were satisfied that perfection in art had been achieved, and it now sufficed to imitate. Greek sculpture for form, Raphael for drawing, Poussin himself for composition, such were the great models whom the school followed with docility. Moreover, just as the French poets of the Renaissance reverenced their Italian compeers, so the mediocre Italian disciples of the great masters gained a borrowed prestige.

The theories of the Academic school were rigid. *Vraisemblance* was glorified, as in literature, because it was considered the expression of rational truth, though mythological and allegorical trappings made the general effect of a picture anything but realistic in our sense. For nature was corrected by art, and reality was exalted to the heroic in representation by means of symbol and allegory, just as in tragedy d'Aubignac put the *vraisemblable* above the *vrai*. Reality must be intellectualized and the enjoyment of art must be logical. The Academy instituted regular lectures at which masterpieces were analysed and interpreted. Where intellectualism prevailed so strongly, form was all important, and drawing was rated almost higher than color. A work of art had to be thought out beforehand as carefully as a masterpiece of literature. Paraphrasing Boileau's "Avant donc que d'écrire, apprenez à penser," Coypel urged "Avant donc que de peindre, apprenez à penser."[2] As has been said, everything was parcelled into precepts. Henri Testelin taught the treat-

[1] Cf. Desjardins, Fontaine and Lemonnier *passim*.

[2] Cf. Jouin, *Conférences de l'Académie royale*, p. 260.

ment of lines, expression, planning, coloring, and so forth. There were rigidly conventional ways of indicating emotions and passions. The parting of the lips, the lines of the eyebrows, the dilation of the pupil, even the position of the body, the meaning of open hands, of clasped hands, of bent shoulders—all was duly classified. A regular vocabulary grew up to express the scowl or wrinkle. Le Brun placed valor in the nose because eagles are courageous, and taught that heroes should, in consequence, be portrayed with aquiline noses.[1] Students were instructed to observe the three unities in art, and the forms were classified in a rigid hierarchy headed by historical painting, and descending through portraits and landscapes, through other forms, to still life and *genre*.

There were even writings which might be called *Arts of Painting* to balance Boileau's *Art poétique*. Fréart de Chambray wrote artistic "parallels" and studies of the idea of perfection in painting, but the most important, which preceded Boileau's work by several years, was Dufresnoy's Latin poem *De Arte graphica*. The author was not a member of the Academy and was, indeed, an advocate of richness of color, a "Rubensist" as opposed to the "Poussinists" of form and draughtsmanship, but it is nevertheless an important document in the history of French classical aesthetics.

Efforts have been made[2] to draw academism from Cartesianism, just as the effort has been made for classicism in general. The text of the *Traité des passions* of Descartes was freely used to substantiate arguments concerning the interpretation of expression, but it is enough to suppose that the passages were used chiefly as corroboration and explanation. The connection of the aesthetics of Descartes, with art as with literature, was one of parallelism rather than of anteriority.

The incarnation of seventeenth-century conventional art is found in Charles Le Brun. Though a painter of undoubted merit

[1] Cf. Fontaine, *les Doctrines d'art*, p. 79, n. 2.

[2] Cf. L. Hourticq, *l' Art académique*, in *Revue de Paris*, 1904.

he tended, by his large artistic enterprises and the absolute rules which he administered, to make art fall into grooves and to become, especially between 1661 and 1690, floridly and ornately decorative. He was not only life rector of the Academy of Painting but director of the tapestry works of the Gobelins. He designed the Galerie d'Apollon of the Louvre, the ceilings of Versailles and many other ceilings and cupolas. He superintended painters and sculptors working under his direction. He surrounded his ceiling decorations with heavy painted and gilt stucco frames, carved with cupids, allegorical figures and garlands of flowers. Examined in detail, the Grand Style in art was ponderous and unreal; taken in a mass and in the vistas of long galleries, it was impressive in its grandeur and symmetry.[1]

It was especially in architecture that the qualities and defects of the art of Louis XIV showed themselves in imposing unison. Critics like Courajod point out with truth the stagy floridity of Jesuit ecclesiastical architecture, and nobody denies that it is an imitation of a debased period of Italian art. They are no less logical but somewhat less convincing when they criticize Claude Perrault's façade of the Louvre or the huge palace of Versailles. Obviously the pillars of the colonnade of the Louvre serve no real purpose of support and had to be surmounted by a balustrade to hide the flat roof, while they themselves were bound together by iron girders. The enormous garden front of Versailles is monotonously regular. Nevertheless, the decorative value of Versailles or of the Hôtel des Invalides is undeniable; they became models for the capitals of eighteenth-century continental Europe, and it is the tradition of such buildings which accounts for the symmetry of the vistas of modern Paris. These buildings have not the soaring idealism of Gothic architecture, but they formed a most fitting background for the courtly life of those days.

It was in landscape architecture that the Great Style was perhaps most ambitiously unsuccessful. The urban civilization

[1] La Bruyère (*Des Grands*), speaking of the taste of rulers, says: "Tout ce qui s'éloigne trop de Lulli, de Racine et de Le Brun est condamné."

which spent its time mostly in drawing-rooms, and considered outer nature inferior to human nature, tried to train scenery into conformity with the *salons*. Le Nôtre's rectilinear designs at Versailles or Saint-Cloud were mathematically satisfying, but the clipped trees, broad lawns conceived as carpets and decorated with evenly-spaced statues like the chairs of a room were even more inconsistent with nature than the colonnade of the Louvre was with the purpose of columns.

In one important particular the methods of art and of literature were confused in the seventeenth century, to the detriment of both. This was a consequence of the *De arte poetica* of Horace and the passage:

> Ut pictura poesis: erit quae si propius stes
> Te capiat magis, et quaedam si longius abstes.[1]

Critics corroborated this passage with a statement credited by Plutarch to Simonides that painting is silent poetry and poetry is a speaking picture. The passage of Horace did not intend to compare the two arts, but merely implied that in neither is it fair to make unjust demands on the artist. Some works must be judged near to, others from a distance. This statement was misinterpreted into meaning that the aesthetics of painting and of poetry are the same. It was against this idea that Lessing reacted in his *Laocoon*.[2] The poem of Dufresnoy *De arte graphica* begins with the specific words:

> Ut pictura poesis erit; similisque poesi
> Sit pictura.

Dryden's *Parallel of Painting and Poetry*, accompanying an English version of Dufresnoy's poem, is one of the important essays on the subject in English. The consequence was that in seventeenth-century classicism literature encroached on art. Painting became stagy, partly because it was assimilated by the critics

[1] Lines 361–362.

[2] On this matter see W. G. Howard's introduction to his edition of Lessing's *Laocoon* and the same writer's *Ut pictura poesis* in the *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 1909; also I. Babbitt's *New Laocoon*, incidentally.

chiefly to dramatic poetry. It borrowed the literary heroic and mythological allegories and tried to tell a story. Coypel, writing *Sur l'esthétique du peintre* says specifically [1] that " tous les arts ont certainement les mêmes principes; par exemple, les poètes ne pourront, je crois, disconvenir du rapport des parties de la tragédie à celles d'un tableau héroïque." [2] Again, he says [3] that the great painter must be a poet, though he may not have written a line. Even the rules of declamation must be familiar to him, so that he may make the gestures of his subjects harmonize with the expression of their countenances. Thus art found itself bound by as many rules as tragedy itself.

[1] Cf. Jouin, *Conférences de l'Académie de peinture.*
[2] P. 239. [3] P. 277.

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